

EREMIE J. SIMPSON

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MY QUEEN

A WEEKLY JOURNAL FOR YOUNG WOMEN

No. 1.

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FROM FARM TO FORTUNE OR ONLY A FARMER'S DAUGHTER



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From Farm to Fortune; OR, ONLY A FARMER'S DAUGHTER.

By GRACE SHIRLEY.

CHAPTER I.

THE DAISY CHAIN.

There was hardly a ripple on the sultry air as Marion Marlowe walked slowly along the dusty country road, picking a daisy here and there and linking them together in an artistic manner.

When the chain was finished she swung it lightly in her hand, notwithstanding the fact that each link held one of her heart secrets interwoven in the form of a wish, as she fashioned the frail necklace.

She paused for a moment upon the brow of the steep hill behind her father's farm, and pushing the gingham sunbonnet back from her face, took her usual evening glance over the surrounding country.

"Same old hills! Same old trees!" she whispered irritably. "And always that hideous old Poor Farm staring one in the face! Oh, I'm just sick of country life and a

horrid farm! Why couldn't I have been born something besides a farmer's daughter?"

The view which Marion gazed upon was not altogether unlovely, but the hills were steep and the pastures were scorched and the Poor Farm, always a blot upon the peaceful picture, stood out with aggressive ugliness in the keen glow of sunset.

Just over the brow of a low hill rose a curling line of smoke. It came from the chimney of the little station where the Boston and New York Express stopped morning and evening, the only connecting link between them and civilization.

Marion Marlowe was seventeen and superbly handsome. Her twin sister was fairer, more childish and a trifle smaller, but both were far more beautiful than most country maidens.

As Marion spoke, her gray eyes darkened

until they were almost black, and the ungainly sunbonnet could not begin to cover her hair, which was long and silky and a rich, ripe chestnut.

Turning her back upon the Poor Farm, which always offended her, Marion suddenly gave vent to her mood in a most extraordinary manner.

Posing on the very crest of the hill with her shoulders thrown back haughtily, she began singing a quaint air which was full of solemn melody, and as she sang her eyes glistened and her cheeks grew even redder, for Marion loved the sound of her beautiful voice—she knew well that she was a magnificent singer, and might readily be forgiven for glorying in her superb natural endowments.

"And to think it should all be wasted here!" she muttered as she finished.

There was a scornful wave of her hand as she indicated the inoffensive country.

She pulled on her sunbonnet with a sudden jerk.

"What could she do?" She asked the question hopelessly, and the very trees seemed to mock her with their rustling whispers.

She could do nothing! She was only a farmer's daughter! She must bake, roast and boil, weed the garden, tend the chickens, and last but not least, she must marry some stupid farmer and live exactly the life that her mother had lived before her.

"I won't do it!" she cried, angrily, when she had reached this point in her thoughts.

"I'll never submit to it! Never! Never! I will make a name somehow, somewhere, some time! Do you hear me, you glorious old sun? I will do it! I swear it!"

With a sudden impulse she lifted her hand above her head. The setting sun threw a shaft of light directly across her path which clothed her in a shining radiance as her vow was registered.

The sky was darkening when Marion drew her sunbonnet on again and started slowly down the hill toward her father's pasture.

She let down the bars at the entrance to the pasture lot easily with her strong, white hands. There were five of the patient crea-

tures awaiting her coming. The sixth had strayed a little, so she strolled about, calling to it, through the straggling brush and birches.

Suddenly there came the unmistakable patter of bare feet along the road; Marion listened a moment and then went on with her search.

"Move faster, there, Bert Jackson! What's the matter with ye, anyway?"

The words were shouted in a brutal voice which Marion knew only too well to belong to Matt Jenkins, the keeper of the Poor Farm.

"I am moving as fast as I can," answered a boyish voice, "but my arm aches so badly that I can hardly walk, Mr. Jenkins."

"As if an ache in your arm hindered you from walkin' fast!" roared Matt Jenkins again. "Faster, I say, or I'll put the whip on ye!"

There was no reply, only the hurried tramp of bare feet in the road, but there was a light crackle in the bushes of the pasture lot as Marion hurried to the bars driving the truant cow before her.

A group of nearly a dozen lads from the Poor Farm were shuffling down the road. They had been working about on various farms through the day, and now were "rounded up" like so many cattle by Matt Jenkins, their keeper, and were being hurried home under the constant goad of voice and lash, the latter a cart whip of ugly dimensions.

Just as Marion reached the bars the squad of boys came abreast of her, and one—a fine, manly looking chap of seventeen or eighteen—glanced quickly in her direction, almost stopping short as he did so.

"Hi, there! Laggin' ag'in, air ye, Bert Jackson!" roared the keeper again. "There! Take that fer yer stubbornness in not doin' as I tell ye!"

The long lash circled through the air and came down with a hiss that made Marion's blood run cold—but only for a minute.

The next instant she had darted straight out into the road, and as the vicious whip was raised for a second cut at the poor youth she sprang at Matt Jenkins with the fury of a panther—snatching the whip from his

hands and throwing it over the fence into the pasture.

"How dare you, Mr. Jenkins!"

Marion's eyes flashed like fire as she faced him.

Her sunbonnet had fallen off and showed her beautiful hair and rose-tinted features. The daisy chain fell and was trampled under her feet in the dust—the links which bound her wishes were scattered and broken.

"How dare you strike a poor orphan?" she cried again. "You are a coward to strike a boy! You ought to be kicked straight out of your position, Matt Jenkins!"

"Huh! You're mighty independent, Marion Marlowe!" growled Matt Jenkins angrily. "I'll tell yer father of ye, Miss High-flyer; an' then we'll see who gits the lickin'."

"My father will never whip me again, Mr. Jenkins," said the girl, almost sadly. "If he does I'll run away, even if I starve to death in a big city."

The boys were all staring at Marion now, and as she looked at them she saw that they sympathized fully with her sentiments.

"They don't dare say so," she thought, as she caught their eager glances. "Poor boys, they are actually envying me just because I have a father!"

Out loud she said bitterly:

"I mean it, Mr. Jenkins, and you can tell him I said so if you wish. I'm not a child any longer, I'm over sixteen! As old as my mother was when she was married," she added proudly.

"Here, Bill Vedder, go git me my whip," was the keeper's only answer.

As the boy addressed started for the whip Marion Marlowe walked directly up to Bert Jackson.

"What's the matter with your arm, Bert?" she asked very softly.

Bert's lips tightened a little and his face paled as he answered:

"It's broke, I think," he said in a whisper. "I fell off the load and struck right on my elbow, but Mr. Jenkins only laughed at me—he wouldn't let me see a doctor."

"It's an outrage, a cowardly outrage!" cried Marion, hotly. "Oh, why am I not a

man so that I could do something to aid you!"

The sensitive face was flushed with anger now and the tears trembled on her lashes as she turned toward Mr. Jenkins.

"His arm is broken," she said, in an agonized voice. "Oh, Mr. Jenkins, do hurry and take him to a doctor!"

"Nonsense!" growled Mr. Jenkins, as he strode forward and made a motion to grasp Bert's wounded arm.

"My God, don't touch it!"

The boy shrank back with a cry of terror.

In an instant Marion was between them, her voice ringing out like a bugle.

"Don't you dare to hurt him, you monster!" she cried furiously; "I won't stand by and see it done even if I am a girl! And when I'm a woman I'll have you put in prison!"

"And I'll help you do it, if I'm alive!" cried Bert Jackson, recklessly; "but there ain't much doubt but what he'll kill me now for my arm hurts so bad that I can't stand him much longer!"

Marion stood like a statue as the group passed down the road. Matt Jenkins looked back at her once or twice, but his whip was not raised while her eyes were upon him.

CHAPTER II.

THE CITY BOARDER.

When they were gone from her sight Marion turned homeward.

The patient cows were well on their way, so the young girl had nothing to do but follow them.

As she came in sight of the low farm-house where she was born she saw a girlish figure coming swiftly toward her.

It was her twin sister, Dolores, or Dollie as she was called, and at the very first glance Marion could see that she was weeping.

In an instant she was running rapidly toward her, and as they met she threw her arms tenderly about her sister's shoulders.

"What is it, Dollie? Has father been tormenting you about Silas again?" she asked breathlessly, at the same time brushing her sister's golden hair back from her brow with a caressing motion.

Dollie wiped her eyes and nodded her head affirmatively.

"Yes, Marion, he has, and I can't stand it much longer!" she cried, sobbingly. "He is just nagging at me all the time, and, oh, he is cruel, sister. Why, when I told him I did not love Silas he just sneered at me as though love was something that was not to be considered!"

"Poor father! It is little he knows of that holy sentiment," said Marion; sadly, "but go on Dollie, what else did he say to you?"

A gleam of resentment shone in Dollie's blue eyes, for she was always more brave when her sister's arms were about her.

"Oh, he said I had defied him and that he would punish me for it! That a man had a right to do as he pleased with his own family, and that girls like you and me did not have a grain of sense about what was best for them!"

Marion's gray eyes flashed as her sister talked, but she walked slowly on and did not interrupt her.

"Then he said that I would have a comfortable home if I married Silas, and that I'd go straight to destruction if he did not look out for me!"

"How horrible!" burst out Marion. "And to think he is our own father! Why isn't he content with one such experiment? Poor sister Samantha, whom he forced to marry Tom Wilders! I should think her miserable life would be a warning to him! Oh, Dollie, if we could only go away and earn our own living. You can play the piano beautifully and I can sing. If we could only go somewhere and make our own way where we should never bother father, I should be perfectly happy!"

The beautiful face was radiant with eagerness now, and some of her wonderful courage seemed reflected upon Dollie's more babyish features.

"It would kill me to marry Silas!" she cried with a shudder. "Father shall not force me to do it, Marion, never!"

There was a close clasp of the arms about each other's waists as the two girls walked on and Dollie's golden head almost rested upon her sister's shoulder.

"Why, Marion, what do you think! He tried to bribe me," she added, suddenly. "He

said I could have grandma's topazes the day I was married to Silas."

A look of disgust swept over Marion's face.

"As if those old earrings of grandma's could make up for such a crime! And it is a crime to marry without love, my sister."

A piteous sob broke from Dollie's lips and she moved a step away.

"There's no help for it, Marion. He'll make me do it," she cried. "He'll ruin my life just as he ruined Samantha's, for, oh, it will kill me to be tied down to the drudgery of farm life forever, and especially with such a man as Silas."

"We must find some way to thwart him," said Marion, as she opened the gate that led to the farm-house. "It is horrible to think of such a thing. The idea of a man trying to get rid of his own daughter, even selling her body and soul, for that is exactly what it amounts to. Silas Johnson isn't a bad fellow, but he is an awful bore. He isn't much like what we have dreamed of in the way of lovers."

They had entered the dingy kitchen now and closed the door behind them. There was no one there, so they went on softly with their confidences.

"I should say not," said Dollie, smiling brightly through her tears, as she recalled the mental pictures of the gallant youths which they had so often woven into the links of their daisy chains, hoping that some day they would come, like Cinderella's Prince, and rescue them from the drudgery of farm life, which they hated.

"Our lovers must be all that is grand and brave and true," she cried excitedly. "They must be of noble blood, like the knights in the story books, who would risk their lives for a maiden's love and think no peril too great to keep them from their trysts. Oh, I have often dreamed of them, Marion, and such beautiful dreams. It was like a glimpse of bliss to be loved by such a lover."

"And just think, Dollie, the world is full of them," cried Marion. "There really are just such knights and they do kneel at the feet of blushing maidens."

"It makes me tremble with delight just to think of it," murmured Dollie. "Oh, Marion, will I ever have a lover like that? One whose

slightest word will make me thrill with pleasure. If we only lived in the city, darling. But no one will ever come here. We will just die longing for love and never, never get it."

"Mine was to have black eyes and brown hair, and be very tall," began Marion, wiping her eyes, "and he was to be, oh, so gentle and tender in his wooing, yet all the time as brave and strong as a lion! Oh, my lover was to be a perfect prince among men, and we were to marry and live in a little paradise of pleasure!"

Her cheeks were glowing as she finished her impulsive speech, and radiant smiles were dimpling her fair features.

"And mine was to have gray eyes; like yours, Marion; and a big mustache, and—but, oh, my goodness! Just look at who is coming!"

Dollie finished abruptly, pointing out of the window.

"It's the man that mother said was looking for board, I suppose," said Marion thoughtfully. "Father must have taken him and he's bringing him straight into the kitchen."

"He's the handsomest man I ever saw!" cried Dollie, springing up. "Quick! Marion, we must tidy ourselves up a bit, dear! He mustn't think we are frights, even if we are a farmer's daughters!"

Farmer Marlowe introduced the girls with an awkward wave of his hand.

"My darters, Mr. Lawson," he said, with an effort at politeness. Then leaving the girls to entertain the new boarder, he strode out of the room again to do the evening milking.

The stranger, a man of thirty, of most striking appearance, stood as if rooted to the spot for at least a full moment after his first sight of the girls.

Such beauty as this was rare in any place, but finding it buried here in the wilderness of rocks and sand, he could hardly believe his senses for a minute.

Marion Marlowe rose politely, and offered him a chair, which he accepted with such a glance of admiration that she could not help blushing.

"I am most fortunate in finding such de-

sirable quarters," he said gallantly, "for I had not dreamed of anything in the way of society in this forlorn little village. You see, I am a bit of an invalid, and the doctor has sent me into the country to rest. Little did I imagine that I should find angels to minister to me! Which will explain, I trust, any seeming rudeness in my manner."

"We stared at you also," said Marion, still blushing, "but my sister and I have seen so few gentlemen, Mr. Lawson, that we were just as much surprised as you were."

She tried to speak naturally, but her voice trembled a little. There was a curious sensation of anger thrilling every fibre of her body.

The man's dark eyes seemed reading her soul. His penetrating glance annoyed and irritated her.

What could it mean? She tried to think calmly. No man whom she had met had ever affected her so strangely.

"I hope I am somewhat different from these townsmen of yours," went on the man smilingly, "no better perhaps, but a little less boorish. It is a shame that such beauty as this should be wasted upon them! Forgive me for what seems to be flattery, but I must speak honestly. You are both too beautiful to be buried here! You should live in the city, my dear young ladies!"

Marion bit her lips to control her resentment, but before she could reply her mother entered the kitchen and began preparations for their homely supper.

CHAPTER III.

MARION PROVES HER INTUITIONS.

The weeks passed swiftly at the Marlowe farmhouse, for Mr. Lawson's presence there had broken the monotony. Not once during his stay had Marion been able to shake off her first impressions.

She dreaded him instinctively, and was ill at ease in his presence.

There was a mystery about him which she could not fathom—but her intuitions were keen, and she decided to trust them.

Marion was too amiable to ordinarily allow her feelings to be seen. Not even

to Dollie had she made full confession of them.

Mr. Lawson's attentions to her sister worried her exceedingly—but with Silas Johnson as the alternative, she was forced to be silent.

One morning Marion took her churn out under a big locust tree near the kitchen door and was churning vigorously when she overheard an astonishing conversation.

Silas Johnson and her father were just around the corner of the house, but neither knew of her presence or they would have spoken more guardedly.

"I've sed it an' I calkerlate I'll stick ter it," her father said, sullenly. "Dollie shell marry yew, Sile, so yew needn't git up yewr dander!"

"Oh, I ain't got up no dander, Farmer Marlowe," was the reply; "but it's high time ther thing wuz done an' settled, fer I'm gittin' a leetle tired of seein' that thar city chap with Dollie. Yew know gals will be gals, an' ther ain't much dependin' on 'em."

"Oh, ther city chap's a-goin' ter-morrer ef that's what's worryin' yew," replied the farmer, quickly. "An' as quick's he's gone, I'll hev it out with Dolly. It's ther best thing fer her an' she's got ter dew it."

"Yew kin hev them papers back on our weddin' day," said Silas, with a rasping chuckle.

Marion held her breath. Here was a new phase of the situation.

"Thankee, Sile, I'll be plum' glad tew git 'em, I kin tell yew!" said her father, sighing. "Them air dog-goned papers hez worried me like thunder, but, ez yew say, it'll be all in the fambly when yew marry Dollie."

Marion drew a long breath and grasped the churn handle tighter. In another moment the two men rose from their seats and sauntered out to the garden, still talking seriously.

"So it is a business transaction of some sort!" whispered Marion to herself.

"Pa owes Silas some money or something, and he is going to settle it by giving him Dollie!"

She rose from her stool, her face fairly crimson with anger. As she turned to enter the house she confronted Mr. Lawson.

For just a second Marion hesitated to tell her trouble to this man, then an uncontrollable impulse made her turn to him appealingly. She had forgotten all else but her sister's danger.

"Oh, Mr. Lawson, I must tell you an awful secret," she cried, brokenly, "and oh, I do hope you will be able to advise me—you are wise and—and kind—I am sure that you will help me. Father is in debt to Silas Johnson, and Sile has made him promise that Dollie shall marry him!"

The tears trembled on Marion's lashes as she said the words, and in her intense excitement her dark eyes shone like diamonds.

Carlos Lawson looked at her with unusual interest. His first thought was of her beauty but he controlled himself enough to answer:

"The thing would be outrageous!" he said after a second; "what has that freckle-faced clod to offer Dollie, I should like to know!"

"He has a farm of his own, that is all," said Marion, hotly; "or he may have a mortgage on father's, for all I know, but if he had the wealth of the world he should not have my little sister!"

"But how can you prevent it?" asked Mr. Lawson, a little coldly.

Marion looked up at his face and trembled as she read his glance.

"I—I hoped you would be able to advise me," she said, slowly. "I know so little of the world, Mr. Lawson. Oh, can't you think of some way to save my poor sister?"

Once more Marion's eyes shone through her tears as she gazed up into his face. Her full lips trembled with emotion. Her face was transfused with unusual beauty.

Again the sense of her beauty flitted through Carlos Lawson's brain, and this time he made no attempt to control it. How had he ever become enamored of pretty Dollie's childish face when this spirited creature was constantly before him!

A dark flush mounted to his cheek and brow as he bent forward quickly and laid his hand upon Marion's shoulder.

"I will save her, yes—on one condition," he whispered, sharply. "I will save your sister if you will kiss me, Marion! My God, but you are beautiful. Quick, Marion—your answer!"

With a stifled scream Marion Marlowe flung his hand from her shoulder and sprang away from him. Her face paled in an instant at the insult he had offered her.

"So that is the kind of a gentleman you are," she said, scornfully. "To try to take advantage of a girl in her misery!"

The man took a step forward, but Marion stopped him with a gesture.

"Don't you dare to come nearer!" she said sternly. "I'm only a poor farmer's daughter, but I respect myself, sir! I regret that I spoke to you about Dollie at all! I might have known better. I have never trusted you!"

She stood with her right arm upraised as she said these words, her fair face turned unflinchingly toward the handsome insulter.

A careless sneer crossed the man's dark face.

"You have never trusted me, eh," he said, half smilingly. "Well, that will not make much difference with me, I guess. You'll trust me more some day, my haughty Marion!"

"Never!" cried Marion, with a hot flush of shame. "Not as long as I remember your insulting words. But enough, Mr. Lawson, I will not detain you longer."

She swept by him like a queen and went into the house.

Her mother was sitting in the kitchen patiently darning stockings.

"Mother! mother!" cried Marion sharply, as she threw herself on her knees by her side. "Is it possible that you are willing for Dollie to be sacrificed? Are you going to sit calmly by and see her sold in bondage to Silas Johnson?"

"What kin I dew?" asked her mother, irritably; "ef your father sez so, what kin I dew? Tain't a wife's place to meddle with her husband's runnin' of his fam'ly."

"But think of it, mother, what her life will be when she is tied to a man whom she does not love! Have you no sympathy for your daughter? Think what you have suffered! And there is poor Sister Samantha! She is a perfect slave to her stupid husband, when with her looks and talents she might have done so much better!"

"Your father is the head of his fam'ly,"

said her mother again. "It ain't my place to go ag'in him. He knows what's best fer yew an' Dollie!"

Marion groaned aloud and rocked back and forth on the floor.

Dollie opened the door of the little parlor where she had been busy dusting and stared at her sister.

She had a big bandanna tied over her saucy curls, and with her dainty face flushed with exercise she looked like some quaint, old-fashioned picture.

"Silas will make her a good husband, I'm sure," said Mrs. Marlowe, meekly.

"O' course he will, Marthy," said the old farmer, who came in just as she spoke. "An' what's more, I'm a-gittin' mighty sick of this ternal nonsense! Dollie hez got tew marry Sile, an' that's all ther' is abaout it! Why, there's dozens of gals as would jump at ther' chance! 'Pears tew me that Dollie is determined ter fly in ther face o' Providence in ther foolishest manner. She'd orter be a-thankin' her stars fer gittin' sech a husband!"

Dollie stood, duster in hand, staring at her father as he spoke. There was a dull look in her eye, as if she had not fully understood him.

"Dollie! Dollie! Why don't you speak? Why don't you tell father what you think! Oh, Dollie, what is the matter?" cried Marion sharply.

"I—I don't want to marry Silas," she finally whispered. "You tell him, Marion," she turned to her sister appealingly, and gazed from one to another of the little group with a frightened face. She seemed like one in a trance who was trying to grasp the situation.

Marion sprang forward swiftly and threw her arms around her sister. There was something wrong with Dollie, but she had not time to puzzle out what it was—this question of her marrying Silas must be settled at once and forever.

Turning so that she faced both her father and mother, Marion rested her right hand lightly on her sister's shoulder.

"I will answer him, sister, and it shall be once for all, for this anxiety is killing me. I can brave it no longer. When a girl's own

father and mother refuse to protect her it is high time for some one else to interfere. Dollie does not love Silas Johnson and she shall never marry him, for in spite of you both I will find some way to prevent it."

CHAPTER IV.

THE ABDUCTION OF DOLLIE.

Joshua Marlowe's tanned and bearded face grew pale at his daughter's words. They rang in his ears for hours after she uttered them. He was not an altogether bad man at heart, but he was narrow-minded and ignorant. First of all, he loved his farm; wife and children came after.

This deal with Silas had been his own secret.

If the marriage was not consummated it would become public property.

But what was a man to do with a daughter like Marion? It was a proposition which would have puzzled a wiser man than Solomon.

Martha Marlowe had always been an obedient wife. It did not occur to the old farmer that Marion might have inherited her obstinacy in some degree from her father.

The day following the tragic scene in the kitchen Marion spent in close companionship with Dollie, but still the girl's manner baffled and pained her.

"Are you sick, Dollie, or worried?" she asked, over and over, but each time there came the same reply. Her sister declared that she was perfectly happy.

Marion watched her as she went about her daily work. She moved like one in a dream, always smiling, but appealing.

"Poor Dollie! Poor little sister!" Marion whispered, as she tucked her into bed and went out into the air to think a little.

It was a clear moonlight night, and Marion walked farther than she thought, finding herself again on the brow of the hill where she had registered her vow during the glow of sunset.

The distant roar of the express came slowly to her ears, gradually growing louder and louder until with a piercing shriek it prepared to slow down at the little station.

Marion strained her eyes, but not even the

light was visible. For some reason or other the blast of the whistle had made her shudder. As the train puffed away she felt curiously depressed. The air seemed more sultry; it was almost choking her.

After the last rumble of the wheels had died away the silence was more intense than ever.

The very landscape itself seemed wrapped in slumber, but the view from the hill was growing more attractive to her eyes, for even the Poor Farm's ugliness was mellowed by the moonlight.

Suddenly Marion's sharp eyes detected a moving form. Some one was coming across the fields from the direction of the Poor Farm, but avoiding the open spots on the way in a suspicious manner.

"One of the boys has run away!" exclaimed Marion, in dismay. "Poor fellow! He'll be caught and soundly whipped to-morrow!"

She watched with eager eyes as the poor boy hurried from lot to lot, keeping as close as possible in the shadow of the trees, but as the moments passed there was no sound from the Poor Farm.

"It's Bert Jackson!" whispered Marion as the boy came nearer. "Poor Bert! His broken arm is well again, they say! I wonder if he has been flogged that he is running away from his prison!"

She ran down the hill as swiftly as she could.

"Bert! Bert!" she called softly. "It is only I, Marion! What's the matter, Bert? Has anything serious happened?"

The boy came out of the shadow cautiously and joined her before he answered.

"A great deal has happened," he said, bitterly; "but I can't talk about it. I'm just boiling with rage! I'm running away, Marion."

"Of course," said Marion, simply, "I knew that when I saw you, but where can you go, Bert? Tisn't safe to risk the station, and besides, there's no train now 'til to-morrow morning."

"I know it," answered Bert quickly. "I'm going to walk to Haysville. It's only five miles, and there's a train from there to New York at four in the morning."

"New York," echoed Marion, in a frightened whisper. "That's a big city, Bert! Are you sure you ought to go there?"

"The bigger the better," said the boy, smiling bitterly. "I've got to lose myself for awhile, you know, so that brute cannot find me."

He nodded toward the Poor Farm and Marion understood the gesture.

"I hate him!" she said, with a stamp of her foot. "I've hated him ever since he hit you that day, the monster!"

"Well, he's hit me a good many times since," said Bert, slowly. There was a hard ring in his voice that cut the air like a bit of metal.

"Have you any money, Bert?" asked Marion, after a minute.

"Not a cent," said the boy, doggedly; "but I reckon I can earn some. I'll have to steal my ride to the city, that's the part that's bothering me."

"No you won't!" said Marion, stoutly. "I've got five dollars, Bert! Quick, come back to the house with me! You've got to do it!"

"Oh, I can't take your money," began Bert, but Marion stopped him.

"You shall take it. Come!" she said, commandingly, as she caught his arm and almost dragged him toward the farm-house.

Leaving Bert hidden behind a clump of lilacs in the yard, Marion crept stealthily around to a side door and into the house to get her five dollars.

A lamp was burning in the sitting-room, and as Marion passed she glanced up at the clock. She had been out over two hours, while every one else was in bed and sleeping.

Marion found the money in her own chamber, and then tip-toed to Dollie's. Her anxiety for her sister was making her almost nervous.

She peered into the room, which was clearly lighted by the moon.

Her sister was not there. The bed was rumpled but empty.

Marion flew down the stairs and through the side door to the yard.

"Bert! Bert!" she called softly, but nobody answered.

"Oh, dear, what has happened?" she whispered to herself. "There's something wrong; it's in the air! I know it! I feel it!"

A soft step on the walk made her turn expectantly.

Bert Jackson was just behind her. He had been in the kitchen. He explained it by whispering that he had been after a drink of water.

Marion did not give a thought to this fact while her mind was in such a whirl; she only hurried to him quickly and gave him the money.

"Oh, Bert," she said, in agony. "I can't find Dollie! She's gone somewhere, I don't know where! She was in bed when I left her!"

Bert looked at her in surprise, but there was no time to lose. He must be off at once if he expected to catch the train from Haysville.

"I'll let you hear from me, Marion, in some way," he whispered gratefully. "And if anything has happened to Dollie, you can count on me. I'll never forget you, Marion, you are such a friend to a fellow!"

"Take care of yourself in New York, Bert," said the girl, tremblingly, "and who knows what may happen in that lovely big city?"

"Good-by, Marion," answered Bert, "I'm sure something good must happen."

He darted away and Marion went back to the house. There was not a sign of her sister's returning.

Suddenly Marion made a discovery that nearly turned her brain. Every article belonging to Dollie's Sunday wardrobe was missing.

In other words, she had dressed herself in her best when she went, and this fact was significant even to a girl like Marion.

Darting downstairs, the frightened girl awoke her father and mother.

"Dollie has gone! She has run away!" she cried in agony. "Oh, father, come quick and perhaps we can find her!"

But not a trace of Dollie could be found, nor was Mr. Lawson, their boarder, to be found on the premises.

Marion set her teeth hard when she made this discovery.

"They've gone together! He's took her!"

whined Mrs. Marlowe. "He's run off with my darter! the scallywag!" bawled Deacon Marlowe, but Marion only clenched her hands and bit her lips. It was horrible to think of Dollie in the clutches of her insulter.

"What shall you dew, father?" asked Mrs. Marlowe, at last.

"Dunno," said her husband, a little absently. "I calkerlate, tho', I'll jest ler 'er go! Pears tew me that's about what she des sarves, the for'ard critter!"

Marion Marlowe's eyes flashed as she heard this decision, but she did not deign to make any answer.

Going straight to the old chest behind the kitchen door, she opened the lid and began overhauling its contents.

"What dew you want in there?" asked her father, suspiciously.

"I want grandma's topazes," she said very firmly. "I am going to sell them to Widow Pearson; you know she always wanted them, and the money will enable me to hunt for Dollie!"

"Yew sha'n't tech them!" cried both her mother and father at once.

"They are ours—Dollie's and mine," said Marion, calmly. "I shall use them as I think best—"

A scream finished the sentence.

"They are gone! The topazes are gone!" she cried, excitedly. "See, here is the chamois bag! It is completely empty!"

She held it up to the flickering light that fell from the tallow candle in her mother's hand.

A double crime had been committed—abduction and theft. Marion sat down on the chest and burst out crying.

"It's Dollie that's done it!" bellowed Deacon Marlowe angrily. "It wasn't enough fer her tew disgrace herself an' us by runnin' away with that air seller, but she must up an' steal the topazes, the brazen hussy! She shall never darken my door ag'in! The wicked jade! the—the—"

"Hush, father! Don't you dare to call Dollie names," cried Marion. "If any one to blame, it is that black-hearted scoundrel! Oh, I knew he was a villain! Why didn't I watch him!"

Marion had sprung from the chest and was confronting the old farmer—her eyes scintillating with feeling, and her drawn lips were almost bloodless.

"My sister is innocent! Do you hear me, father! Shame on you for being the first to condemn your own daughter!"

Her voice was so sharp that it seemed to hiss through the air, and the old farmer shrank back as though she had struck him.

Mrs. Marlowe covered her face with her hands and began to sob, but Marion's eyes were burning—she had done with weeping.

Now was the time to act—to save her sister.

CHAPTER V.

A DARK DEED.

It was almost dark when a long, dust-covered train drew slowly under cover of the Grand Central Depot.

The rush and roar of the big city was at its height and the pushing, jostling crowd of travelers inside the station was noisy, rude and bristling with impatience.

As the long stream of passengers swept through the yawning archway, a young girl stepped aside from the throng and leaned in some bewilderment against the wall of the building.

No one noticed her at first except by a casual glance, for she was poorly dressed and just a bit awkward.

It was plainly evident that she was waiting for some one.

After several minutes had passed she suddenly removed her veil—a hideous green one which had distorted and disguised her features.

After that when any one glanced at her they turned to look again, for such a face as Marion Marlowe's was not often seen in the big city.

At last the crowd dwindled to only the employees of the station, and a messenger in a red cap stepped up and accosted her civilly:

"Excuse me, miss, but can I be of service to you?" he asked, politely. "You know it's our business to look after passengers."

"Thank you," said Marion, sweetly. "I

am waiting for my uncle. I wrote him that I was coming, and I fully expected him to meet me."

"Ought to be here if he's coming," said the man, good-naturedly; "you've been waiting nearly an hour. You must be getting pretty weary."

"I am, and hungry, too," said Marion, smiling; "but you see I am a country girl, and I don't know my way. I would certainly get lost if I were to attempt to find him."

As she spoke she did not notice that a well-dressed man had suddenly drawn near and was listening intently to her remarks without appearing to do so.

"What's his address?" asked the messenger, in a business-like way.

Marion took a slip of paper from her reticule, and handed it to him.

"Frederic Stanton, The Norwood," the man read aloud. "That's a good ways from here. You'd better take a cab."

"How much will it cost?" asked Marion, anxiously.

The messenger consulted his table of rates for a moment before answering.

"Two dollars," he said, finally; "but of course your uncle will pay it. Mighty queer of him not to meet you when he knew you were a stranger in the city."

"But you see he doesn't know me!" said Marion, quickly. "He married my mother's sister Susan, but we girls have never seen him. I—I was obliged to come here on business, so I had to write to him. There was no one else, and he wrote back that he would meet me."

"Perhaps he did and didn't know you," said the messenger more cheerfully; "but anyway, I'll get you a carriage and send you to him."

"Here!" he called to a cabman standing a short distance away. "Take this lady's trunk check and here's the address she's to go to." He turned away with the air of one who had done his duty.

The man who had been watching Marion moved a little nearer. When the cabman came up he heard the conversation between them.

After the "cabby" had placed Marion in

his vehicle, he started back into the depot to find her trunk, and as she leaned from the cab window and looked after him Marion saw that he was joined by the stranger.

She could not hear what they said, but she saw the cabman shake his head repeatedly while the man wrote something on a piece of paper without once stopping talking.

Finally she saw a bill change hands between them. The cabman had evidently relented, for he pocketed not only the money but the paper the stranger had written.

As the young girl was rapidly driven up-town she gazed out of the cab windows and the scenes of the great city made her face pale and flush alternately.

Every little while she felt in her bag for her money—the fifty dollars which her father had at last given her when she denounced him so vigorously for his treatment of Dollie.

"I'll find her! I'll find her!" she kept whispering to herself, and then the fearful proportions of the great city staggered her and she would be almost overwhelmed by the enormity of her undertaking.

She took a crumpled paper from her bag and read it over. It was a letter from Bert Jackson written in a cleverly disguised hand, telling her that he had reached New York safely, and giving her the address of a cheap lodging-house that he was making his home for the present.

Marion had answered the letter promptly, giving him the news of Dollie's disappearance, and she knew full well that Bert would be constantly on the lookout for her sister.

"Poor Bert! I must hunt him up," she whispered, with a sigh. "He'll help me find Dollie. He's really my only friend in all this big city!"

Then another thought entered her mind and would not go away. She was thinking of Bert's visit to the kitchen that last night and the sudden disappearance of the family jewels.

"He wouldn't have written if he had been guilty," she whispered decidedly. "It was Mr. Lawson who stole them! The infamous villain who abducted my sister!"

Marion breathed a sigh of thankfulness that she had never mentioned her suspicions

There would have been people enough ready to accuse him if they had known of his visit to the farmer's kitchen.

"When one is down, everybody gives him a kick," she said to herself. "Even poor, dear Dollie was not spared! Oh, how our own neighbors slandered my innocent sister!"

Just as she finished her reflections the cab drew up before a handsome building. Marion saw the words "The Norwood" in gilt letters over the door, and in another instant the cabman was at the window.

"You sit here a minute, miss, till I see if he's in," he said, as he moved toward the entrance. He disappeared within the building, leaving Marion trembling with excitement.

"It's no wonder Aunt Susan's husband never recognized us," she whispered bitterly. "He's rich and lives in luxury, while we are only poor farmers. Oh, I do hope they won't be ashamed of me just because of my plain clothes."

She looked down at her homespun dress with a sorrowful sigh. Then her face brightened a little as she reflected that at least it was tidy and very neat fitting. She was not to blame for her personal appearance.

Five, ten minutes elapsed before the cabman reappeared, but when he finally came he had a colored man with him, who promptly lifted Marion's little trunk to his shoulder.

"This way, miss," said the negro, and Marion followed happily. Such proof of her uncle's wealth made her heart beat more rapidly. It did not seem possible that he could refuse the slight request she had come to make of him.

Marion's eyes grew even brighter as she stepped into the upholstered elevator and was carried to the top floor.

It was the luxury she had dreamed of during her whole life on the farm. She looked upon it as a friend. It neither embarrassed nor startled her.

At the door of a beautifully decorated apartment stood a middle-aged man. Marion had only time to notice that he was bald and dissipated looking when he stepped for-

ward smilingly and introduced himself as her uncle.

"Your aunt is away at present," he said glibly, "but our housekeeper, Miss Gray, will attend to you, my dear. I am sorry, very sorry, that I missed you at the station."

"Then you were there!" exclaimed Marion gladly. "Oh! I was sure you would come—but I ought to have taken off my veil before. I had sent you my picture so you would be sure to know me."

"Well, you are here now, safe and sound," said the man rather awkwardly; "but, I say, niece, isn't it right that you should kiss your uncle?"

Marion glanced at him sharply and colored with surprise. There was something in his tone that offended her deeply. Should she refuse? The question flashed through her brain like lightning. She must win his good will in order to help Dollie. With this determination she stepped forward and kissed him on the cheek.

"Oh! not so cold a kiss, my beauty," said the man with a leer; "a real love kiss for your uncle—like this!" he cried, bending over her.

"Don't!" cried Marion sharply, springing back as she spoke. "Don't look at me that way; it is not nice at all, and it makes me feel that you are not really my uncle!"

She stood staring at him with dilated eyes, and a thrill of horror coursed through her veins that she could not account for.

There was a rustle of heavy draperies and a handsomely dressed woman entered.

"Come with me, my dear," she said shortly. "Your uncle is not exactly himself tonight. You see, he has just dined and has drank a little too heavily."

Marion drew a long breath as she went immediately toward the woman. She was glad that his action could be accounted for reasonably, but the horror was still there—she could not overcome it.

The man did not make the slightest attempt to detain her, but Marion caught a significant glance which passed between the two, and her heart began beating so fiercely that it almost suffocated her.

As soon as she was alone with the woman whom her uncle had called his housekeeper,

she lost no time in telling the whole story of the cause of her journey.

"My poor sister has been abducted by a villain," she cried in conclusion, "and there is no one but me to rescue her from him! Oh, if I should be too late, I am sure it would kill me!"

CHAPTER VI.

THE PLOT OF A VILLAIN.

Adele Gray listened intently to the country girl's story, but not so much as by an expression did she show that she sympathized. She was a woman of twenty-five and would have been exceedingly pretty only that her face was marred by lines of sorrow about her mouth and a coldness in her eyes that was very repelling.

Her gown was of rich materials, and she wore a few expensive jewels; further, every movement which she made was indicative of natural refinement.

The coldness of her manner was something which she had acquired—even to an inexperienced girl like Marion it bespoke a morbid condition.

"I have ordered some dinner for you," she said, quietly, as Marion finished. "Here it is; you must be hungry after your tiresome journey." She rose to meet the waiter, who was placing a loaded tray upon the table.

Marion ate her dinner in some perplexity, for every few moments Miss Gray excused herself, and pouring a glass of liquor from a decanter on the table, took it in to her host, who still remained in the parlor.

"Does he always drink like that?" Marion ventured to ask timidly; "for if he does, I am sorry for my poor aunt. She must be wretched indeed to have a drunken husband."

A grim smile stole over the woman's face. "He is drinking a little more than usual tonight," she said softly, "but don't worry—it won't hurt him, and you will be that much safer."

"Why, what do you mean?" asked Marion in alarm.

Miss Gray laughed bitterly.

"Wait until he is dead drunk," she said, "and perhaps I'll tell you."

Marion was almost too astonished to even

think, but as yet not a suspicion of the truth had dawned upon her.

That the man in the parlor was her uncle she did not doubt for an instant, but she was filled with disgust at the possession of such a relative.

"Of course he is no blood relation," she whispered to herself. "And he may not be a bad man when he is in his sober senses. What a pity it is that he should drink!" She drew a long sigh at the conclusion of her reverie.

"There!" said Miss Gray, coming in and depositing an empty glass on the table. "At last he is safe for the night, at least! Now, I am ready, Miss Marlowe, to hear the rest of your story!"

It was the first sign of genuine interest that she had shown, and Marion smiled at her gratefully before continuing:

Miss Gray watched her with the sharp glance of an eagle as she talked. There was an intensity in her gaze that puzzled Marion.

"And you have come to New York alone to search for your sister," she said finally. "Without funds or friends you have entered upon this mission?"

"I have fifty dollars," said Marion reluctantly, "and, oh, Miss Gray, do you not think uncle will help me? He must be rich to live in such luxury!"

Before she answered the question the woman rose and looked around, moving every drapery and curtain and looking behind it cautiously. At the last she tiptoed to the front room and listened a minute, when she returned she moved her chair as closely as possible to Marion's.

"See here, girl, you look brave," she said, very softly. "Can you face a serious matter without flinching, do you think? I have something to tell you, but you must promise to be perfectly calm when you hear it."

As she spoke Marion noticed that her hands were trembling; she clinched them tightly, as though she resented this trace of weakness.

"I promise," said Marion, staring wide-eyed at the woman. "I am not a child, Miss Gray—you must see that you can trust me."

"I see that I can," was the quiet answer,

then the woman leaned forward and whispered rapidly:

"You have made a terrible mistake, my child, but you are not to blame. You are in the wrong place—your host is not your uncle!"

Marion caught her breath sharply but did not utter a sound.

"Who is he, then?" she said softly, clasping her hands tightly together.

The woman shrugged her shoulders and glanced quickly around the room.

"Never mind who he is," she said, almost roughly. "He is not your uncle, and he is not married. Now tell me, who is your uncle, and how did you come here?"

Marion replied with eager promptness:

"My uncle is Frederic Stanton, and he lives at 'The Norwood.' I wrote him at that address and he answered my letter. He married my mother's sister, and he is very rich, so rich that he has never recognized any of his wife's relatives in the country. When Dollie was abducted my father disowned her and I was obliged to write to uncle, then I came to him," she finished simply.

"There are a dozen apartment houses in the city by that name," said the woman thoughtfully. "He probably lives at the biggest one, uptown on Fifth avenue."

"I don't know," said Marion anxiously. "I only knew 'The Norwood.' You see I did not even think that there might be two of them."

"Well, he should have thought and told you," said the woman, "or the cabman should have as soon as you told him."

Marion gave a quick exclamation, which was as quickly smothered. She had thought of something that might explain it.

"There was a man watching me in the station while I was waiting," she said slowly. "He heard uncle's name and the address, I am sure, and afterward I saw him give the cabman some money and a scrap of paper. Do you suppose it is possible——"

Miss Gray interrupted her:

"Is that the piece of paper?" she asked, drawing a scrap from her pocket.

Marion took it and read these astonishing words:

"Dear Ted: Here's a treasure, right fresh from the country. Name, Marion Marlowe, looking for her uncle, Frederic Stanton at 'The Norwood.' Married her mother's sister, but she has never seen him. Expected him to meet her, but, luckily for you, he didn't. I'll be around to-night; meanwhile I wish you luck. Don't ever say again that I'm not a judge of beauty."

The note was not signed, and Marion looked at the woman inquiringly.

"That was written by the blackest villain in New York," said Miss Gray, her voice vibrating strangely, "and it is not his first effort in that direction either."

Marion rose from her chair and confronted the woman. She understood at last the full horror of her position.

"I am the victim of a plot," she said at last. "Oh, my dear Miss Gray, how can I thank you for telling me?"

For once the woman smiled; her features had softened amazingly. Marion's expressions of gratitude seemed thawing her coldness.

"But can I not protect myself against them?" asked Marion, after a minute. "Can't I have them arrested by a policeman or something?"

Miss Gray smiled at the country girl's ignorance of such matters.

"No use," she said shortly. "What could you do? You haven't an atom of proof that you did not come here freely."

"But that bit of paper?" cried Marion, pointing to the note that Miss Gray was holding between her fingers.

In the coolest possible manner the woman tore it into atoms.

"Would mean nothing at all, I can assure you," she said quickly; "for in the first place, I have destroyed it."

She rose and tossed the fragments into the grate as she spoke. Marion stared at her helplessly; she was too bewildered to answer.

When Miss Gray came back her eyes were shining dangerously.

"They have gone a little too far in their dastardly deeds this time," she said in a whisper. "But have I the courage to thwart their plottings?"

She began pacing the floor as she asked the question.

Marion watched her for a moment in sympathetic silence. The woman's agony was so genuine that it could not be mistaken.

"Oh, I shall despise myself utterly if I do not save her!" she muttered, "for the others it did not matter, but this poor child is innocent!"

Marion sprang to her side as she comprehended her meaning.

"You surely do not mean that he would harm me!" she whispered sharply. "Never! Never! Miss Gray, the thing is outrageous! Come! Let us leave this place at once," she urged. "Surely you can get a position elsewhere! You need not work for such a monster!"

The woman hesitated a moment and Marion doubled her entreaties.

"Come, Miss Gray, put your hat on and we will leave this place at once! We will go somewhere, anywhere, so that we escape from that creature!"

"If he finds me I am lost!" muttered the woman slowly, then she raised her head defiantly, as she added, "but I will risk it!"

"But surely he is not your jailer," cried Marion in surprise.

"He is worse than that," was the woman's answer. "He has wrecked my life, and made me his tool, but it shall end to-night, yes, by your purity, I swear it!"

There was a sudden fierceness in her speech that startled Marion. She resembled nothing so much as a creature at bay, a poor, wounded creature who had turned upon her persecutors and was thirsting for vengeance.

A church clock struck ten as they left the building, the country girl, as innocent as an angel, and the woman who admitted that her life was clouded and blackened.

"Where shall we go?" asked Marion as they reached the curb. The lights of the big city were already bewildering her.

A cab rattled up to the entrance as she spoke and a man sprang out and started into the building.

Miss Gray caught Marion by the arm and pulled her into the shadow.

"That is Emile Vorse — your pseudo uncle's true companion," she whispered savagely.

"It is the man who watched me at the

depot," answered Marion, as she gave him a sharp glance. "Oh, I never knew before that such creatures existed!"

"Come," said her companion, as she hurried down the street. "I must get as far away as possible now that Emile has come. He will arouse his friend, and that means that my hours are numbered."

"What injury could they do you?" whispered Marion as they hurried along.

"They could tell the truth about me and make me lose my soul!" was the woman's strange answer. "One more goad from that villain and I shall commit murder!"

Marion shuddered violently, but there was nothing to be said. Her companion had hailed a cab and was helping her into it.

CHAPTER VII.

ON THE TRACK OF THE ABDUCTOR.

A half hour later Miss Gray and Marion alighted before a small, third rate hotel and Miss Gray paid the cabman with a bill which seemed to be all the money she had in her purse.

Almost as if in a dream Marion followed her into the office and up the stairs to a room on the top floor.

"We'll stay here to-night," said Miss Gray, as she locked the door carefully, "and tomorrow you shall go to your real uncle, Miss Marlowe. Just remember that 'The Norwood' is on Fifth avenue; any officer will direct you if I should not be able to go with you."

"But, dear Miss Gray—you are in trouble yourself, I am sure of it," said Marion eagerly. "Can't I help you in any way? Just think how much I owe you!"

"You can help me, yes, but I will not tell you how, now," was the woman's answer; "neither will I tell you my story. It is not fit for your ears. Some other time, when I have vindicated myself perhaps—but come—let us retire, for you are weary and sleepy."

Marion went to bed gratefully, for she was almost worn out with excitement and fatigue. In spite of her anxiety and bewilderment she soon fell asleep and slept soundly.

When she awoke next morning the sun

was shining brightly. She raised herself from the pillow only to find that Miss Gray had deserted her.

"Gone! And I am all alone!"

Marion whispered the words as she sprang out of bed. After a hasty glance about the room she was more astonished than ever.

Not only had her companion left her alone in the hotel, but she had taken every article of Marion's homely wardrobe, leaving her own expensive garments in exchange for the poor ones.

Marion sat down in amazement to think over the situation. Suddenly she remembered her money and sprang up to look for her reticule.

She was horror struck when she found that gone also. In its place was Miss Gray's expensive pocket-book. She opened it quickly. It contained the contents of her bag minus forty dollars. Marion looked at the lone five-dollar bill in despair.

"Well, if this doesn't beat all!" she said aloud. Then in spite of her dismay she burst out laughing, and the result was wonderful—her courage came back to her.

"I guess I have the best of the bargain after all," she went on as she looked at the clothing, "but it will never do for me to go to see uncle in that dress! He would be suspicious of me right away! As like as not he would think I had stolen it."

She mused a little longer and then began to dress. It was evident that she must wear Miss Gray's gown for awhile, at least, and at last she became curious to see how she would look in it.

"It fits as if it was made for me," she whispered as she tripped over to the mirror. "We must be nearly the same size, for even her shoes are just my number."

She glanced down at her little foot with a feeling of pride—it was the first time she had ever worn any shoes but "cowhides."

When the dainty, graceful girl was fully arrayed in the stylish garments she could not help flushing with pride at her pretty reflection. A beautifully made suit of rich, blue crepon, a dainty hat, gloves, veil and tan shoes made up a far prettier costume than she had ever hoped to wear, and surely she was justified in taking the good of it, for

it was no fault of hers that Miss Gray preferred homespun.

As soon as Marion was dressed she went directly to the office, hoping to learn something of her companion from the clerk behind the desk, but on her guard not to say anything that might sound as if she mistrusted her.

The man behind the desk gave her a glance of admiration, but it was plain that he saw nothing unusual in her appearance.

"She went out about daylight," he said, in answer to her question. "She paid for the room. Do you wish to keep it any longer?"

"I hardly know yet," answered Marion, trying not to appear green, "I'll just have some breakfast, I think, and then I have an errand to do."

"Oh, well, it will be here when you want it," said the clerk good-naturedly, "and, anyway, it is yours until eleven o'clock to-night, so you've got all day to make up your mind. The dining-room is right in here, if you are looking for breakfast."

Marion thanked him sweetly, and walked to a table with as much grace as a queen, although the long skirts were clumsy and made her feel a little awkward.

There were a dozen or more people just taking breakfast, and they all stared at her in such open admiration that the young girl could feel herself blushing hotly.

When she paid her bill she was glad to find a young woman at the desk. She looked pale and worn, but her face was not unkindly.

"Do you know where I could find a real cheap boarding-house, miss?" she asked timidly.

The young woman looked her over critically before she answered.

"Sure! I know dozens of 'em," was her rather curt reply. "But, Gee! you don't want a very cheap one, I guess! You don't look as if you had to count your pennies!"

"But I do," said Marion, smiling, as she comprehended the look; "and I'd be very much obliged if you could give me some addresses."

The cashier scribbled two or three on a piece of paper. "Here, I guess these are

about the thing you want," she said, handing it to Marion.

"I'll bet she has run away from home," she said to a waiter, as Marion thanked her and moved away. "She looks like a rich girl all right, but it's ten to one she's had a scrap with her folks! She'll get sick of it, I'm thinking, especially if she goes to boarding."

When Marion reached the sidewalk she opened Bert's letter and read it again. It was a Bowery lodging-house that he was stopping at when he wrote, and she decided to hunt him up and consult with him before going to her uncle.

"He may be able to advise me," she thought, "and I need a friend now if I ever did, for I am alone in this big city with only five dollars! Oh, shall I ever be able to find my poor sister?"

As she walked slowly along the street she studied the street signs carefully, and more than once she saw both women and men half stop to stare at her.

Finally she saw a big man in a blue uniform, and knowing that he must be a policeman she went up boldly and asked him to direct her to the lodging-house.

"Is there some one there you know?" asked the officer kindly, "'cause if there isn't you'd better keep out of that neighborhood. I can see you're a stranger, although you don't look like a country girl by a jug-full!"

"Well, I am nothing else," answered Marion, smiling a little. "But I am not afraid to go to the lodging-house if you will tell me the way. I can take care of myself, I am sure, and there is a boy there that I must see, sir."

"All right, then," said the officer as she finished speaking. "Just walk over two blocks and take a Third avenue car. Tell the conductor to put you off at the number you've got. I wouldn't try to walk there—you're apt to get tangled."

Marion thanked him and hurried on, her cheeks tingling with excitement. It was lovely to be in a big city at last. To be actually experiencing one of her daisy chain wishes, but the next moment she thought of Dollie, and all the pleasure vanished.

There was no car in sight so Marion

walked on. She was thinking deeply of Dollie now, and was almost crying.

Suddenly a man brushed past her and leered into her face. Marion turned her head instantly and stepped up as if to glance into a nearby window. The man walked on, leaving Marion staring absently at an array of jewelry, seemingly odds and ends, which were displayed in the window with price marks attached to them.

Slowly, and almost without realizing it Marion's gaze concentrated itself upon a pair of curious shaped earrings. They were golden brown topazes in quaint, old fashioned settings. Then with a little scream she leaned forward until her head nearly touched the pane. They were her grandmother's topazes—she recognized them instantly.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE FIRST NEWS OF DOLLIE.

As soon as Marion had recovered from her surprise at discovering the familiar jewels in such an unexpected manner in this little shop, she determined to make some inquiries.

"Will you please tell me where you got those?" she asked of the big nosed Israelite behind the counter, at the same time pointing to the topazes in the window.

"I comes honestly by doze, is dat vat you vant to know?" said the shopkeeper, shrewdly. He was on his guard instantly, and had no notion of parting with the jewels. From the nature of the place and its surroundings Marion easily guessed that it was one of those establishments where the possessor of jewelry is not too closely questioned as to where it was obtained, so long as he is willing to sell it at a low price. In other words a place where stolen goods are bought and sold.

"I don't want them," said Marion quickly, as she guessed what he meant, "I just want to get the address of the person that left them here. She is a friend of mine, the woman who owned them, and I want to find her if she is in the city."

The man looked at her sharply and saw that he had nothing to fear.

"I tells nottings," he said, crossly, "except

dat I bought them vrom a man vot I nefer saw before."

"Then it was not a lady who left them," said the country girl, quickly.

"I tells nottings more," repeated the man.

Marion left the shop, being unable to elicit further information. She was satisfied now that Mr. Lawson was in the city—or was it Bert who had pawned them? It lay between them.

"I am sure it was Lawson," she whispered firmly: "I will not allow myself to think ill of Bert. Poor boy, I pity him, alone in this big city."

She hailed a car and was soon riding down the Bowery just as the officer had told her, but she was so upset over her discovery that she hardly glanced out of the window.

Twice the conductor had to ask her for her fare, and when the stylish, handsome girl asked him how much the ride would cost he stared at her in earnest, and so did the passengers.

But Marion was learning very rapidly, now. Excitement was clearing her brain and sharpening her wits. It would not be very long before she would rid herself of her timidity at the great city's bewilderments.

When she reached the lodging-house she found a pleasant faced man at the desk, who spoke to her kindly when she stated her errand.

"There's been a boy here for two weeks by the name of Bert Jackson," he said at once, "but he went away yesterday because he had no money. He'll show up again, I presume, so you can leave a note for him if you wish."

"Poor Bert!" cried Marion impulsively, "but what will he do without any money?"

"You can trust that kid for getting along," said the gentleman laughing. "He's the oldest sixteen year old I ever saw. Why he's as bright as a New York boy already, yet he tells me he has always lived in the country."

A half dozen ragged boys came in just then and stood eyeing Marion in great astonishment. The young girl soon caught some whispered remarks, which she knew were intended to express admiration.

'She's de swellest ting wots come down

de pike! Bert Jackson must belong ter de high-mucker-mucks ter have loidies in togs like dose a comin' ter see him!"

"She's er Jim Dandy fer fair! Oh, why ain't I got one coming wid me? Dat's my bloomin' luck!" was the whispered answer.

The gentleman at the desk was just handing Marion a pencil when a commotion in the street made them both turn and look out of the window.

"It's Bert Jackson! De cops got 'im!" yelled one of the boys, and in a second the whole group of them were out on the sidewalk.

"Oh, it is Bert," cried Marion, as she caught sight of her friend, standing up very straight with a policeman's hand on his shoulder.

"He's got into some scrape. I'll go and see what it's about," said the gentleman, and as he started for the door Marion followed him promptly.

The sidewalk was fairly blocked with boys when they finally got out, and there seemed to be scores of them coming from all directions.

"He knocked a gentleman down," said the officer, as he recognized the superintendent of the lodging-house.

"He wasn't a gentleman, he was an abductor!" cried Bert Jackson stoutly, and just at that moment he caught sight of Marion.

For a second the stylish garments puzzled him a little, then he threw up his hat and gave a whoop that made even the officer jump in astonishment.

"She's here! Dollie is here! I just saw her!" he shouted. "She was with that fellow Lawson, and, I tell you, I hit him a good one!"

"Which way did they go?" cried Marion, trying to push her way to his side.

"I couldn't see!" said Bert bitterly, "for the cops had collared me, but I hit him once, anyway! Some day he'll get another!"

"What does he mean?" asked the superintendent, who hated to see Bert taken to the station-house. "Perhaps if you can explain it the officer will let him go."

"Oh, do let him go, sir," cried Marion instantly. "The poor boy is trying to help me find my sister Dollie, who was abducted

three weeks ago from our home in the country!"

"Oh, come off!" said the officer, turning to scowl at the boy. "Dat's all very foine, but it don't go wid Moike O'Flarriety."

"It's truth just the same, and if it hadn't been for you I'd have knocked him silly," said Bert, scowling back at his captor. "I was trying to speak to Dollie and he stepped between us. I intended to knock him down and then run away with her."

"Sure, dat's just wot I tought," said the officer promptly; "attempting to kidnap a gurl in broad daylight and right in me beat, the impudent shpaldeen!"

"Well, I guess you can let him go, can't you, officer?" asked the superintendent coaxingly.

"Not on yer loife!" was the reply. "Wot 'ud the caption say to me? Faith, an' it's to the station-house I'll tak' him, and let the s'argent dale wid him!"

"And you let that villain escape while you arrested a boy!" cried Marion, half crying. "Oh, my poor little sister! Will I ever find her?"

"Why don't you ask them at headquarters to send out a general alarm, miss?" asked the superintendent as the officer strode on, half dragging Bert along with him.

Marion's eyes flew open in unbounded surprise.

"Why, I never thought of that," she said delightedly, "I came here all alone to look for my sister!"

"Well, you've got lots of courage," remarked the superintendent, staring at her.

"Poor Bert! I am so sorry for him!" cried Marion in distress. "To think he should have been on the very verge of rescuing Dollie when he got arrested!"

"They'll help you at headquarters," said the superintendent kindly, as he wrote some directions on a piece of paper.

"Will you keep this address and give it to Bert when he comes back?" asked Marion, as she scribbled the name of the hotel where she had spent the night.

"Certainly, miss, and I'll do more," said the gentleman smiling; "I'll go around to the station-house at once and try to get

him out. I think I know a way to outwit that brutal officer."

Marion thanked him warmly and then started uptown, but before she could make her visit to headquarters conscientiously she felt that she ought to do a little thinking.

"I beg your pardon, miss, but I think there is a pickpocket following you!"

A gentlemanly voice spoke almost in Marion's ear as she walked along, with her eyes bent on the sidewalk.

The young girl looked up quickly and saw a gentleman at her side. He had spoken so quietly that his sudden news did not alarm her.

Marion turned and saw a slouching figure skulking swiftly around the corner, and then she also noticed that she had lost her way, she was no longer on the Bowery.

"I have nothing that he could steal, but I thank you just the same," she said politely, as she glanced up at the aristocratic looking stranger who was gazing at her admiringly.

"It is a bad neighborhood for well-dressed people, particularly ladies," said the young man, smiling. "These thugs would knock you down and steal your pocket-book in a jiffy."

"How dreadful!" said Marion, clutching Miss Gray's beautiful purse a bit tighter; "but I am afraid I have lost my way, I am going to Police Headquarters."

The young man looked surprised, but he answered very pleasantly:

"You have, indeed, but I can soon set you right. I am bound for that neighborhood myself, and will be glad to escort you if you will allow me."

Marion looked up at him shyly before she answered. As their eyes met she blushed deeply with a delicious sensation of pleasure. He was smiling down at her so sweetly and with such honest admiration that her heart went out to him instantly—she knew that she could trust him.

CHAPTER LX.

THE PICTURE ON THE POSTER.

"My dear Miss Marlowe, I would certainly tell the Chief of Police every word that you

have just told me! Why the thing is infamous! I can hardly believe it!"

"Yet, it is true, every word, and I am glad I have told you, Mr. Ray! Some way you have given me courage by your unexpected sympathy. Yet it is strange that I should have made such a confidant of a stranger."

"You can trust me absolutely, my dear young lady! I would scorn to deceive any man in the world, much less a young girl who needs my friendship and protection."

Marion was walking side by side with the young man whom she had met and who had insisted upon escorting her all the way to Police Headquarters. She could not explain how she came to tell him her story. It must have been her unaccountable confidence in the handsome young stranger. When she glanced at him shyly she read only honor and chivalry in his face, and every word that he uttered served to convince her of his refinement. It was plainly to be seen that he was a thorough gentleman, and if fine clothing counted for anything he was certainly wealthy.

"And you think no harm would come to Miss Gray by my story?" she asked eagerly. "Poor girl, I am sure that she must have been deeply wronged, and not by one word would I ever injure her!"

"I am sorry for her, too," said the young man, seriously. "Her case is a sad one, I am sure. There are many such cases, the more's the pity. But you must sacrifice her in order to save your sister. You will have to tell the whole story; there is no way out of it."

"I will if I must," said the fair girl, sighing; "for first of all I must rescue my poor sister from the clutches of that scoundrel—but oh, Mr. Ray, do look at that picture!"

Marion had just caught sight of a flaming "poster" on the side of a building directly in front of them. She stopped as if spellbound and gazed at it intently. Her companion stared at it also, but could not quite understand her emotion.

"Carlos Dabroski, Professor of Hypnotism," glared in large type from the poster directly over a full-sized lithograph of a man in evening dress, apparently addressing an audience.

"What is it, Miss Marlowe?" asked the young man quickly.

Marion gasped for breath as she tried to answer.

"Oh, Mr. Ray, that is the picture of Mr. Lawson!"

"What! the fellow that abducted your sister?" cried her companion in dismay.

The beautiful lips quivered pitifully over the awful revelation.

"I am almost sure it is the same," she murmured as she stared hard at the picture. "He is changed in some way, I can't tell exactly how. Oh, I see it all now! The black-hearted monster! He hypnotized her, my poor, innocent sister!"

"He is to give an exhibition of his power to-night," said Mr. Ray, who was reading the big bill. "The rascal will hypnotize some 'subjects' at Poole's Theatre this evening."

Marion shut her white teeth with a defiant snap.

"Well, he shall have me for an audience, Mr. Ray," she exclaimed, sharply. "Oh, to think of my sister being in the clutches of that monster!"

"Don't cry, Miss Marlowe! You may be mistaken," said Mr. Ray, quickly.

It hurt him as much to see her grief as though she had been his own loved sister.

"Oh, I'm not going to cry," whispered Marion, with the tears almost on her lashes, "but I am going to do some plotting to trap that fiend; and, oh, Mr. Ray, I do hope that you will help me!"

She turned toward him appealingly and held out her hand. There was an expression on her face that made it radiantly beautiful. Archie Ray glanced around quickly. There was nobody looking.

He would have given the whole world to have clasped her in his arms, but he knew instinctively that such an action would never be forgiven him.

As he controlled himself and raised her hand to his lips, he murmured softly:

"Till death, Miss Marlowe, you can count upon my friendship, for although I have not known you an hour yet—"

He stopped abruptly. An eloquent glance from his dark eyes left no doubt of his sentiments.

Marion's hand trembled in his grasp and her face was suffused with blushes. For a moment she was so confused that she did not know how to answer.

"You are very, very kind," she stammered at last, "and I appreciate your—your friendship, I assure you, Mr. Ray. It comes like a burst of sunshine in this awful hour of misery. If you will only help me to save my sister! Every hour, every moment must be fraught with agony to poor Dollie."

"Let us hurry to Police Headquarters," said the young man, quickly, "and you must tell them all—every word of your story."

There was no hesitation in Marion's manner now, although she inwardly prayed that her words would not bring Miss Gray into any trouble.

"She was a true friend to me," she said, very sadly. "Poor girl! I pity her with my whole heart and soul. If I could only find a way to punish that old monster."

"I fancy he's a bad egg," said the young fellow, thoughtfully. "There are lots of his sort in the city, unfortunately, and no woman is wholly safe who falls into their clutches."

"Poor Miss Gray was afraid of him," said Marion, sadly, "but she has defied him now. Oh, I do hope it is well with her."

"She stole your money," was the man's curt answer.

"She took it," corrected the young girl, quickly, "but she left me all her expensive clothes. There is a mystery in her actions that I cannot fathom."

"Well, one at a time," said her escort, smiling; "but here we are at headquarters, Miss Marlowe. Shall I go in with you?"

He looked at her anxiously as he asked the question.

A soft, rosy flush stole over her face.

"I think not," she said slowly, as she gave him an arch smile. "I'll have quite enough to do without explaining our acquaintance."

"I guess you are right," said Mr. Ray, as he returned the smile. "I will be on that corner when you come out, Miss Marlowe, for I don't intend to leave you until you are safe with your uncle."

"Oh, thank you!" cried the girl, gratefully. "You are more than kind."

Then a deep flush mantled her charming features as she remembered the words of almost love which he had spoken.

In another minute she was on the steps of the building. Her heart was beating so hard that she could almost hear it, but she was determined not to falter in her search for Dollie.

"I'll tell all!" she whispered, "everything that has happened except"—here she paused and blushed a little deeper—"except that I have met a young man whom I think is just the most charming gentleman that I have ever met."

CHAPTER X.

MARION FINDS HER UNCLE AT LAST.

A visit to the chief of police was naturally an embarrassment to a young and inexperienced girl like Marion, but his kindly manner put her at her ease.

He was unusually interested in the astonishing story which this beautiful country girl told him. If he doubted her words he did not betray it, so Marion talked on rapidly, feeling sure of his sympathy. The only item of information which Marion kept

back was the fact that Bert Jackson had run away from the Poor Farm, and it did not occur to the great detective to question her on that point. Every word that she uttered was carefully taken down, and before she left the building an investigation was in progress.

She told him of Bert's adventure with the hypnotist, and the chief sent an order for his immediate release.

"Now, what are you going to do next, miss?" the chief asked her kindly. "You seem to have a mind of your own, and I would like to hear what you will do personally toward finding your sister."

Marion looked at him fearlessly, as she answered promptly:

"I shall go to that theatre to-night, sir, accompanied by Bert, and see this Professor Dabroski. If he is our former boarder, Mr. Lawson, I shall know him instantly. He may be disguised, but I am sure I shall know him!"

The chief looked at her keenly.

"I'm sure you will," he said slowly. "I should hate to be the man to do you an injury, Miss Marlowe."

This shrewd, worldly man had read the fair face at a glance. He saw in the flash of those gray eyes an indomitable spirit.

"I might forgive one to myself, but to my sister, never!" said Marion, sternly.

The chief was gazing at her in admiration. She looked like a queen with her head poised so defiantly.

"Here is Frederic Stanton's address," he said, after a minute, as he glanced over a directory. "Why, he is a prominent society man, Miss Marlowe. He is as proud as Lucifer. Are you sure he will help you?"

Poor Marion sighed.

"He must," she said, slowly, "for I have not five dollars in the world, and there is no one else I can look to."

The head of the great Detective Bureau did a few minutes' thinking, then he gave Marion some instructions, all of which she promised to follow.

"These are very necessary," he told her as he finished, "for if this villain has wronged your sister he must be punished without mercy. And now you had best go right up to 'The Norwood' and see your uncle. If he will help you, all right; if he won't, why just let me know. You can stay at that hotel that you mentioned at present, and one of my men will be on hand at the theatre this evening."

Marion thanked him for his advice and accompanied by Bert, joined Mr. Ray on the corner. Bert and Mr. Ray were introduced, and immediately seemed to take a mutual

liking to each other. She had her uncle's correct address now, and they were soon at "The Norwood." Mr. Ray slipped his card into her hand as he and Bert left her at the door.

"We'll call for you here later," he said, with an admiring glance, "and if we don't find you we'll go over to the little hotel. Just as like as not your uncle will give you the cold shoulder."

"He may," said Marion, sadly, "for I've heard that he is very proud. And he doesn't know the whole truth of my visit to the city."

With a last glance of sympathy her friends turned away. Marion was alone again, but this time she was at the door of her own aunt's dwelling.

She was ushered into a reception-room by a smartly-dressed maid, who glanced her over critically and evidently approved of her appearance.

"Wonder how she would have liked me in my own clothes?" thought Marion. "Ten to one I'd have received some cold glances from her if it wasn't that I look so out and out stylish."

After quite a long wait she was ushered into her Aunt Susan's presence. It was the most unpleasant moment of the young girl's whole adventure:

A fat, pudgy woman, very showily dressed, but who looked quite a little like her own mother, rose from a sofa as she entered.

There was a poodle in her arms, that snapped and barked savagely.

"So this is my niece," said the woman, languidly. She raised a lorgnette to her eyes and stared at Marion rudely.

"I am your Niece Marion, Aunt Susan," said Marion as sweetly as possible. "I came yesterday, as I wrote you, but I must have missed uncle at the station."

"Oh, he did not attempt to meet you," said her aunt, still languidly. "He found he had a dinner engagement which prevented, but really, my dear, you are better than I expected."

At this cool announcement, Marion's color rose, but she bit her lips to control her feelings.

"Thank you, aunt," she said, simply; "I am glad that you approve of me. Your sister's children are not gawks, even if they do live in the country."

"So I see," said her aunt, "and it relieves my mind considerably. But tell me, Marion, how do you happen to be wearing such expensive clothes? Why, they are really quite fashionable! Can your father afford to dress you so stylishly?"

Marion burst out laughing before she answered.

"My father would not know me if he should see me," she said honestly. "You see I have dressed myself according to my surroundings, aunt. I knew you would feel disgraced if I came to you in homespun."

"Very thoughtful indeed!" said her aunt, thawing out a little. "Take off your hat, Marion, and I will order some luncheon. Really, you are extremely pretty. I am very glad to see you."

Marion's lip curled scornfully as she took off her hat. She would have been glad to have boxed the old lady's ears, but as she couldn't she watched her chance and teased the poodle for relief.

In a moment the door opened and her uncle came in. He was a pompous-looking man who tried to impress every one with his importance. He greeted her with a patronizing nod, looking her over critically, as his wife had before him.

"Glad to see you, of course," he remarked, very frigidly, "but we are, er—very busy, don't you know—so much doing in our set at present."

Marion ate lunch with her relations before she told her story. She felt that she must fortify herself against what was probably coming.

When the servant had cleared away the things, she began talking quietly. She was determined to lose no time in enlisting her uncle's sympathy.

"What! Dolly abducted, and here in New York?"

"You were sent to the apartments of a bachelor—alone!"

"Stayed all night at a cheap hotel with a—
a man's housekeeper, did you say?"

These exclamations of dismay interrupted Marion's narrative.

"There—now I have told you all, uncle!" cried Marion, as she finished. "I have told you the whole truth, and I must rely upon your kindness! I should not have dreamed of coming to you had not Dollie's own father disavowed her."

"And quite right of him, I say!" almost screamed her Aunt Susan, who had supplied herself with smelling salts before Marion's story was half over.

"And you expect me, a society leader, to mix myself up in this affair! Why, the thing is disgraceful! It will all be in the papers!"

Her uncle puffed himself up to an alarming degree as he spoke, but Marion controlled her feeling of disgust by a powerful effort.

"Is it anything against poor Dollie that

she should have been hypnotized by that fiend?" she cried, earnestly. "Or is it anything to my discredit that I should have been tricked by scoundrels? We are only children, Aunt Susan! What do we know of the world? Why, we are both as innocent as the very field daisies at home, yet you scorn us for our misfortunes—you ridicule our sorrow!"

"We cannot afford to get entangled in this thing, Frederic," said her aunt, without heeding her appeal.

"We certainly cannot," said her husband, decidedly. "Once for all, Marion, you must excuse us from meddling in the matter."

"So you refuse utterly to aid me in my search for Dollie?" asked Marion, breathlessly.

Frederic Stanton drew a bill from his pocket slowly and tossed it to her across the table.

"You can have that," he said grandly, "but please don't count upon me further. My position in society would be attacked at once were I to allow myself to be exploited in this manner."

"Don't mention our names, for heaven's sake!" cried her aunt. "I would die of mortification if I should see this thing in the papers."

Without noticing the bill, Marion rose to her feet. The scorn upon her face made her relations shrink a little.

"I'm only a country girl—a farmer's daughter," she said slowly, "but, oh, how I despise such natures as yours! You are a shame to your sex; Mrs. Susan Stanton, and as for you, sir, you are not worthy to be called a man."

There was not a word spoken as Marion adjusted her hat.

As she left the apartment she did not even glance behind her.

CHAPTER XI.

THE RETURN OF MISS GRAY.

How Marion reached her hotel she could hardly say, but when she opened the door of her room she was astonished to find Miss Gray waiting for her.

"I've brought you back your clothing," she said, with a soft laugh, at the same time pointing to a valise that was standing on the table.

Marion had only time to notice that Miss Gray was attired very simply in black, when her visitor rose and held out her hand to her.

"Oh, Miss Gray, I'm so glad!" cried the young girl. "I felt sure that you would come back, but your action was so strange

that I could not help wondering why you did it."

"And I knew you would not think ill of me," said the woman, smiling, "and it is your faith in me, Miss Marlowe, that has made me a different woman. Listen," she said calmly, as she drew Marion down beside her, "I will tell you my story now; but, first, here is your money."

Marion took the money absently, and held it lightly in her hand.

"Do go on with the story, I am impatient," she said eagerly.

Miss Gray's face flushed a little as she started, but the flush soon died away and left her composed and natural.

"I am the daughter of a rich man in this city," she began, "and I married a man quite out of my own circle of society. At least, I thought I was married to him, but the wretch had deceived me! I found it out when it was too late. I did not dare to admit it. Since then I have lived under an assumed name in this city, although we are supposed to be abroad. That wretch that you saw last night was my 'make believe' husband!"

"But your father?" asked Marion in breathless interest. "Would he not take you back and punish the villain?"

"He would, yes, for he is a noble man," was the sad answer; "but my brother and sister are in society—my sister is engaged to be married I hear—it would injure them terribly should my story be known. For their sakes I have suffered and shall continue to suffer."

"Oh, that is terrible! terrible!" cried her companion sorrowfully. "But, thank Heaven, you have been strong enough to leave him at last! Your life there must have been dreadful! Oh, how I pity you!"

"A drunken brute is not a very desirable companion," said the woman scornfully, "and oh, the deeds of that infamous man! And to think that I had to witness them, yes, and even to protect him in them!"

"You were a martyr to your family, Miss Gray," was the soft answer. "I cannot believe that you did right; still, I must not judge you."

"Right! I should say not!" cried Miss Gray with a flush of shame. "I was his dupe, his tool! I did not dare to oppose him! Oh, to think that a woman could fall so low—why, Miss Marlowe, women came there and I had to meet them; but, thank God, I came to my senses in time to save the innocent!"

"I shall never forget it," said Marion, softly. "And now, Miss Gray, I must tell you my day's experience."

Miss Gray listened intently as Marion told her what she had learned. When she finished she put her arms around her and held her closely.

"I must leave you now," she said, after a little, "for I am planning to leave the country forever. But you are wondering why I took your clothes. It was because that I wanted to disguise myself to get back to my room unknown to Emile Vorste and get my few possessions and my money. In your dress I was able to do it, and I needed your money to bribe the servants. I expected to be back before you awoke, but Vorste was there, and I had to wait until he went out."

"But will he not pursue you?" asked Marion.

"I am afraid so. I don't know what to do!"

"Come with me," said Marion. "Let us cast our lots together! Help me to find my sister, Miss Gray, and then, if it is necessary, I'll change clothes with you forever!"

"You are a brave girl!" cried Miss Gray, laughing at this allusion to her deed. "My clothes certainly are becoming to you, dear, but give me a little time. I will think it over."

"He does not know where you are?"

Miss Gray shook her head.

"Then you will not see him," said Marion, decidedly. "You will stay with me, I am sure of it!"

There was a tap on the door, and a bellboy handed Marion a card.

"A young man whom I met this morning on the street," she said, blushing. "I guess I forgot to tell you that part of my adventures."

"Ah, a romance, I am sure," cried the woman, smilingly. "You are blushing, dear, your face is scarlet."

"Come and see him," said Marion, taking her friend by the arm.

They walked down the stairs and entered the parlor. As Mr. Ray rose to meet them Miss Gray uttered a shriek of horror.

Instantly the young man sprang forward and caught her in his arms.

"Adele! Oh, Adele! My dear sister!" he cried. "Poor child, I am so glad to find you at last! We have all heard your story and have been nearly crazy about you!"

"You have heard my story?" whispered Adele Ray, faintly.

"Every word of it, dear," said the young man smiling, "and father is only waiting to get his clutches on that infamous scoundrel, while—well, see here, sis, I've got a seven-shooter in my pocket!"

He drew an ugly-looking weapon out of

his pocket as he spoke, but as his sister gave a scream he promptly returned it.

"And you all forgive me?" whispered Adele, still unable to believe him.

The young man took her in his arms and kissed her tenderly.

"You are as dear to me as ever, sis," he said, reassuringly, "and every member of the family is yearning to embrace you."

"Then you can go home at once," cried Marion, delightedly.

Archie Ray gave her a look that set her heart to beating wildly.

"Yes, she can go home at once," he repeated, gladly, "while you and I, Miss Marlowe, go to rescue Dollie."

Marion thanked him with a glance from her starry eyes. She appreciated his kindness keenly—he was a friend indeed in her hour of trouble.

"I must give you back your pretty clothes, Miss Gray," she said, smiling and blushing, "but I confess I almost dread to get back into my poor little frock! I am afraid my brief glimpse of fashion has spoiled me."

In a very few words Adele Ray explained about them to her brother:

"I shall never wear them again, pray keep them," she urged, as Marion still hesitated. "They would only remind me of associations which I must try to forget. Do keep them, Miss Marlowe, you look so pretty in them."

Marion blushed, but she shook her head, decidedly.

"I cannot afford to wear them even though you give them to me, Miss Gray," she said, slowly. "I must dress according to my station in life, and as yet I am only a poor farmer's daughter."

"But surely you are not obliged to wear homespun when you have something better! That is false pride, my dear," said Miss Gray, stubbornly.

"I wish I could think so, but I can't," said Marion, sighing; "for I do love pretty clothes. I guess I wouldn't be a woman if I didn't."

"Well, you must keep them, anyway," said Miss Gray, decidedly. "You'll get over those notions some day, and then they'll come in handy."

"She means that you will not be able to resist putting on the pretty duds," said Mr. Ray, who was listening "and I hope you won't try very hard to resist, for all women should dress prettily, it is a part of their duty."

Marion smiled, but her eyes were growing sadder every minute. She was beginning to wonder if he would like her as well in homespun. Some way she hated the thought that he would ever be ashamed of her.

Then after a moment her good sense returned. "It will be a good test for his friendship," she thought. "I'll do it for that reason as well as the other."

An hour later Mr. Ray had taken his sister home and Marion was alone in her room arrayed in her simple, country garments.

"I'm not so stylish, but I'm much more comfortable," she said to her reflection in the mirror. "How I would look going after the cows in a long, train dress! Why I couldn't jump a fence to save my life, and as for climbing trees, that would be out of the question."

The people in the hotel stared at her a little the next time they saw her, but as they were not in the habit of inquiring into the private affairs of their patrons, she was not subjected to any special annoyance.

Even in her plain clothing she was strikingly pretty. There was a grace in her carriage and a flash in her eye that any queen on her throne might well have envied.

CHAPTER XII.

MARION DISCOVERS DOLLIE.

Once more Mr. Ray proved his noble character. Not by so much as a glance did he show that he noticed Marion's changed appearance.

"Do I look very countrified and dowdy?" she asked, timidly, when he came for her that evening.

"You look as pretty as a peach," was the young man's answer. "There's thousands of women who would gladly change places with you—they'd take your clothes if they could have your face and figure."

Marion was so embarrassed that she could not answer for a minute.

"I am glad you are not ashamed of me," she managed to say finally.

What Mr. Ray would have answered under other circumstances Marion could almost guess, but just then Bert Jackson came in and put a stop to further conversation of a confidential nature.

"Oh, I do hope I am right in my suspicions," she said quickly, when they were on their way to the hall. "I do hope that Professor Dabroski will prove to be Mr. Lawson, for, while it is dreadful for my sister to be in the power of such a monster, still it will end the suspense which is almost killing me."

"I hope so, too, for that reason," was Mr. Ray's answer. "It seems remarkable that you should have found him so soon. The fellow must be a fool to be so utterly reckless."

"Oh, he knew my father would never attempt to rescue Dollie, and there was no one else. Why, he never even gave me a thought! I was only a little country girl; he did not dream that I would follow him!"

"Well, he didn't read your character very well, that's all I've got to say," said Mr. Ray, laughing. "Why, my sister says you would go through fire and water for any one you loved! You have made a friend of her for life, my poor wronged sister!"

There were tears very near Mr. Ray's lashes now, and it was Marion's turn to play the comforter.

"Dear Miss Gray, I loved her almost as soon as I met her, but I must call her Miss Ray now—the other name was a disgrace to her."

"That scoundrel who deceived her is about to pay the penalty for his sins," said Mr. Ray, slowly. "My father is growing old, but he has lots of spunk left. Why, he has already given the fellow twenty-four hours to leave the country. If he stays, we shall make it hot for him, I can tell you, and as for Emile Vorsé, the Chief of Police is after him. It seems that there is enough against him already to send him to prison!"

"He deserves it," cried Marion, "the infamous wretch! No country girl is safe in a city like this so long as it is infested with such wolves in sheep's clothing."

When Marion, Bert and Mr. Ray reached the dingy little theatre they found it nearly filled with a crowd of ordinary-looking people.

They went in at once and Marion selected a seat behind a post, so that she could keep her face continually in the shadow.

She realized that there was a chance of her being mistaken, for a bill board picture is not always over-accurate, and then, too, she admitted that there was something strange about the fancied resemblance.

"It was his general contour that convinced me, not his face," she said, over and over. "Mr. Lawson was very dark, but Professor Dabroski is lighter."

"That is easily done," was Mr. Ray's answer; "but you must be very certain in your identification. It would be an awful thing to accuse the wrong person."

"I'll be very careful," was Marion's answer, and then the curtain went up amid great applauding.

Marion's nerves were so tense that she felt like screaming when her first glimpse of the stage showed it to be entirely empty.

The rough crowd in the theatre began jeering and whistling, and at last a man appeared upon the stage and walked directly to the footlights.

"Is that he?" asked Mr. Ray, in a trembling whisper.

Marion shook her head as she scrutinized the face and figure.

"Professor Dabroski, the greatest living hypnotist, will demonstrate his power before you this evening," began the man, with a pompous gesture, "and to do this it will be necessary for him to secure a few 'subjects,' which will be picked out indiscriminately throughout the audience."

Marion turned and looked at her companion inquiringly, and Mr. Ray hastened to explain the fraud contained in this statement.

"He has confederates scattered all about through the house," he told her briefly, "but they'll make believe that they don't know him, just to fool the rest of us. Then he'll take them on the stage and make them cut capers. Of course, some of them are genuinely mesmerized and some are not, but they all get paid for their part in the performance."

"His power is genuine, I am sure," said Marion softly. "It was surely a black art that deceived poor Dollie."

Mr. Ray looked at her tenderly, and even pressed her hand in sympathy. To him she was the personification of all that was pure and noble.

Suddenly Marion started forward and bit her lip viciously, while she clenched his hand with a grip of iron.

A man had come upon the stage attired in full evening dress. He wore eye-glasses and was a blonde, but Marion knew instinctively that it was Mr. Lawson.

"Hush! Don't make a sound—not yet!" warned Mr. Ray, under his breath.

Marion nodded her head, her eyes were riveted on the "professor."

Almost like one in a trance, she watched what followed; the selection of "subjects" from the curious audience.

As the professor approached her chair, Marion drew back cautiously. While she would have given her all to see him closer, she was afraid herself of being detected.

"You are a shrewd one" whispered her escort; "he did not even see you. Most

women would have stared at him and attracted his attention."

The brave girl smiled sadly as she leaned a little nearer.

"There is too much at stake," she said shortly. "I must be more than cautious if I would save my poor sister."

One after another of the "subjects" were "put to sleep" or led into semi-hypnotic conditions by the professor's magic. They danced, sang, recited, in fact, did anything whatsoever that he wished. Not one seemed able to move a muscle unless he willed it.

The brave country girl's heart grew heavy as she witnessed his power. Her brain seemed to reel under the full consciousness of Dollie's danger.

Suddenly she felt a light touch on her arm from some one in the rear. She turned and saw a quiet-looking man leaning carelessly toward her.

"The detective from headquarters," whispered Mr. Ray, in her ear.

Marion smiled and nodded, and the man moved a little nearer.

"You are sure it's the chap?" he said, very softly.

"Certain," was the girl's low answer, "that is Mr. Lawson."

The man moved away and was lost in the crowd, and just then Professor Dabroski advanced to the front of the stage and made an announcement.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he began, in that voice which Marion knew so well, "I have given you an exhibition of my power this evening which must prove conclusively to every one that I am what the bill boards call me, 'The World's Greatest Hypnotist.' But before this exhibition is ended, I have one more proof to give you. I shall now produce a 'subject' whom you have not seen—a woman who will demonstrate the full extent of my skill, for she is absolutely unable to breathe unless I will it."

There was a roar of applause as the professor finished, which was stilled as soon as he raised his hand for silence.

"This is what is usually termed a 'catatonic' condition," he said, "but you will see that I control it perfectly, which is more than can be done by any physician in creation."

He moved to the rear of the stage and held out his hand, while Marion half rose in her seat, her eyes fixed and staring.

Suddenly from behind the scenes a woman advanced. She was dressed in white and looked like an angel.

As he led her down to the footlights the house was as still as the grave; then a shrill, sweet voice rang out like a bugle peal.

"Stop! stop! He must not do it! That is Dollie, my sister!"

CHAPTER XIII.

THE ARREST AND RESCUE.

For just one brief moment not a sound was heard; then an echoing shriek broke from the lips of the "subject."

"Marion! Oh, Marion! Save me!"

In less than a second the house was in an uproar. Men and women had sprang from their seats and were yelling like demons.

Before any one could stop him, Professor Dabroski darted toward the wings, but while he was still in full view of his audience, he was stopped peremptorily.

The detective from headquarters was the first man to confront him.

"I arrest you for kidnapping," he said very plainly. "Here, handcuff him, officers. We must not take any chances!"

Two officers sprang forward and caught the professor's arms, but he was too thoroughly frightened to make any resistance.

"She is my wife," he said faintly; "she is over sixteen!"

A curse from one of the indignant officers silenced him.

At that instant Mr. Ray sprang upon a seat and explained the situation. His voice was clear and distinct, every person in the house heard it.

A perfect storm of hisses followed his remarks, and for a moment it looked as if the entire audience intended making a rush for the professor.

Cries of "The villain!" "The scoundrel!" sounded on all sides, for in an instant every one appreciated the terrible crime he had committed.

A score of hands were reached forward

and Dollie was lifted straight over the footlights and placed in the arms of her noble sister.

As Marion clasped her in her arms, Mr. Ray and Bert tried to lead the two girls out, while the crowd, as soon as it saw Dollie's girlish, frightened face, yelled with one voice: "Lynch him! Lynch the rascally professor!"

The officers hurried their prisoner away and the detective came back. He had found Dollie's hat and gloves and something to wrap around her.

The crowd made way for them to pass, and as they passed a mighty cheer went up that almost shook the building.

"Hurrah for the brave country girl!" they screamed and howled. "Three cheers for the farmer's daughter who came to the city to save her sister!"

Marion wept with delight as Mr. Ray bundled them both into a carriage, and as for Dollie, she clung to her sister and cried both from fear and pleasure.

When they reached the hotel, Mr. Ray sent a telegram to Joshua Marlowe telling him briefly of Marion's success in finding her sister.

"He will never forgive me," cried Dollie, her face burning and scarlet. "He will never understand that I could not help it! Oh, it seems like a hideous dream! Can I ever forget it?"

Marion took her in her arms to soothe and comfort her, and Mr. Ray bade them good-night in his heartiest manner.

"You have been so good, so kind to me," faltered Marion.

"Who could help it?" was the roguish but sincerely meant answer. "For you are the bravest little woman in all the world, for not only have you found your own, but you have also restored my darling sister."

"And there is much more for me to do," said Marion, moving away from Dollie for a moment. "For I have made the charge of kidnapping against that rascally professor, and I shall leave no stone unturned to have him thoroughly punished. The Chief of Police has told me what to do, but much

will depend upon what I learn of his treatment of poor Dollie."

The two young people looked at each other with solemn eyes.

"Thank God there are such women in the world as you," said the young man soberly.

"And such men as you," said Marion, archly.

"Good-night, Mr. Ray, the honors are even. Good-night, Bert."

Marion took Dollie to her room before she broke down; then, when the door was safely locked, she burst out crying.

"Oh, Marion, dear, what shall we do?" asked Dollie helplessly. "I can't go home to father now! Whatever shall we do in this big, wicked city?"

Marion wiped her eyes and smiled as brightly as ever.

"Nonsense, Dollie!" she said, gayly. "It is not a wicked city at all! It is perfectly glorious! And oh, how I love it!"

"Then you don't intend to go back?" asked Dollie, relieved.

"Never!" said Marion, stoutly, "or, at least not if I can help it. We'll get something to do, and stay right here, Dollie. There's a place for us here, but we've got to find it!"

"Isn't it lovely, Dollie?" cried Marion suddenly. "The superintendent of the lodging-house has found Bert Jackson a position!"

Then noticing Dollie's look she hastened to explain the exciting episode in Bert's day. Her sister was delighted when she heard of the adventure.

"I just caught a glimpse of him on the street," she said, "when that monster, Mr. Lawson, stepped directly between us. Bert knocked him down, but he was up in a flash—then the next I knew poor Bert had been arrested and he was leading me along—I could not resist him."

"You must tell me all, every word," said Marion soberly. "I must know the full length and breadth of that man's villainy, Dollie. After that you must try to forget him, dear! You are safe from him, now—never again can he harm you! When he is safely disposed of we shall have enough to do, for we must go to work to win fame and fortune."

Dollie shook her head and a dazed look crept into her eyes.

"To-morrow, Marion. I am so tired tonight! To-morrow my head will be clearer and perhaps I can remember."

Marion took her in her arms and began smoothing her hair.

"Just one thing, little sister, and then you

shall go to sleep. Did you take grandma's topazes from the old chest, Dollie? I looked for them one night, but I could not find them."

"I took them, yes, dear," said Dollie sleepily. "He told me to do it, and I dared not disobey. There was some reason, I don't know what—I always obeyed him."

"I understand the reason, darling; he had hypnotized you, but now go to bed, dear, we will finish our talking to-morrow."

Marion helped to undress her, soothing her gently as she did so.

"We will get along famously, I am sure we will," she said, cheerily; "for all we need is perseverance and courage."

"And you have courage enough for both," said Dollie, brightening. "You are the bravest girl in the world, and I am proud of you, Marion!"

"I mean that you shall be proud of me some day," said the fair girl, slowly; "for if patience, perseverance and courage count for anything, I shall be famous, even if I am only a farmer's daughter!"

And the beautiful speaker's words were all fulfilled, but before she could realize her highest ambitions there were thrilling adventures to be passed through and dangerous pitfalls to be avoided.

Fortunately for her, there were other charges against Professor Dabroski, and by the advice of counsel, Dollie's case was discontinued. The rascally hypnotist was sent to Sing Sing for ten years without their appearing against him, and the two gentle girls were only too glad to escape the notoriety of a trial.

As for Deacon Marlowe, he lived to repent his hardness of heart. The nobility of his daughters overwhelmed him with shame and remorse, but it was a pity the lesson could not have been learned a little earlier.

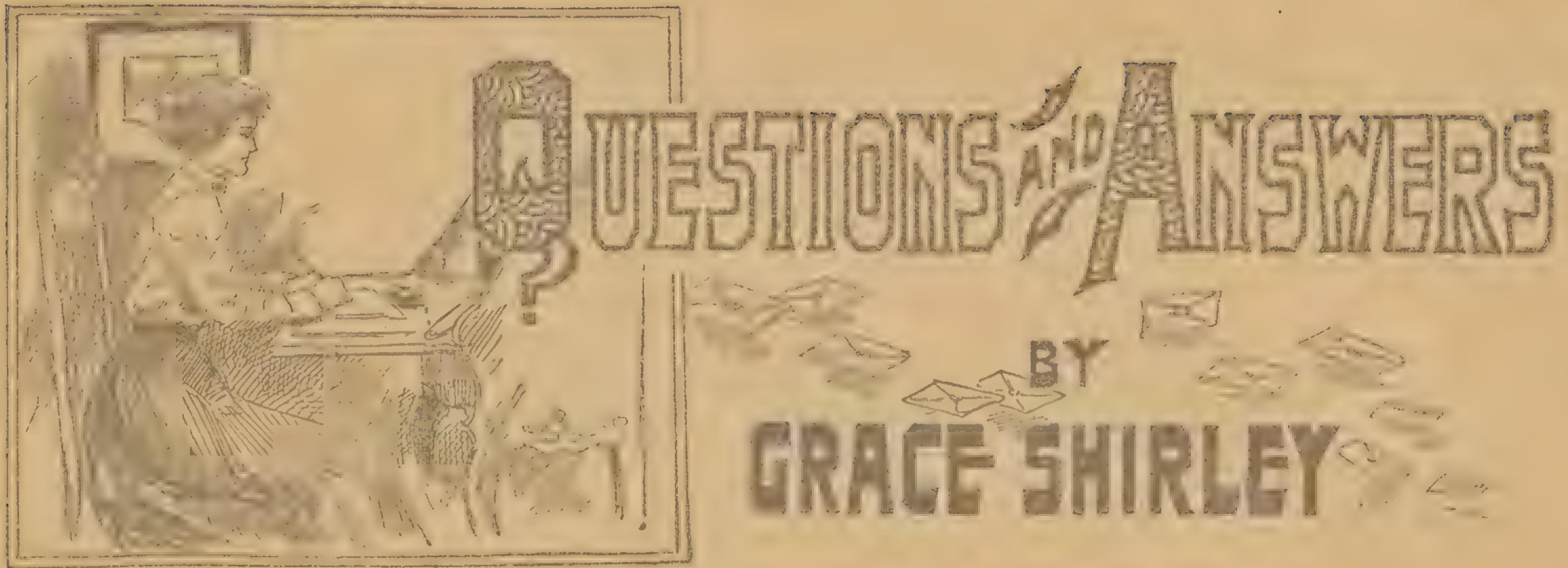
Archie Ray took his sister abroad at once to escape unpleasant remarks, but his friendship for Marion never waned for an instant.

Emile Vorse remained at large for a little time, but both he and his boon companion—the wretch who had wrecked Adele Ray's life—were caught in the net of the law later on and both were confined in the same dismal prison.

Thus the downfall of three villains was at last effected, and all indirectly through the heroic courage of a farmer's daughter.

THE END.

The next number will contain "Marion Marlowe's Courage; or, A Brave Girl's Struggle for Life and Honor."



QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

BY
GRACE SHIRLEY

NOTE.—This department will be made a special feature of this publication. It will be conducted by Miss Shirley, whose remarkable ability to answer all questions, no matter how delicate the import, will be much appreciated, we feel sure, by all our readers, who need not hesitate to write her on any subject. Miss Shirley will have their interests at heart and never refuse her assistance or sympathy.

The following letters are a few which we have received from time to time, addressed to the editors of our different publications, the answers to which will be found interesting.

STREET & SMITH.

"My poor mother died in an insane asylum when I was only a baby. Do you think there is any danger of my ever becoming insane and would it be wicked for me to marry?"

"ELOISE T. C."

You are a very sensible and conscientious girl to ask that question. Yes, it would be very wicked for you to marry. Do not even dream of perpetuating such a fearful curse! The person who, knowing that he or she inherits a blood taint of any kind, commits a fearful sin when they marry and propagate the species. It is your cross to bear. See that you bear it nobly.

"So many young girls have had the benefit of your advice that I feel confident that you will not be unwilling to help a married woman. When I married my husband five years ago I thought he was all that was manly and adorable, and I have tried to be a good wife. Little by little he has seemed to grow away from me, and his business and his men friends monopolize almost all his time. About six months ago I met a man of my own age, and since then I have corresponded with him. My husband is much older than myself, and I have found pleasure and solace in the letters of my new-found friend who seems to care for me deeply. Am I doing wrong to allow myself to enjoy his acquaintance?"

It is evident that you have not been able to justify yourself in regard to this new friend. You do not say that your husband has used you harshly, and his business matters which you complain monopolize so much of his time are, we presume, really directed towards your comfort and protection. It is his business that provides you with your home and your home comforts. If it takes too much of his time to do this, why tell him so. Tell him that you are willing to do with less if you can have more of him. Let him realize that his society is more valued by you than pretty dresses or a handsome house. Many men in their devotion to their wives and from their desire to surround them with every possible comfort wear themselves out with the effort and defeat their own aims. If your husband is of this type he deserves the very last atom of your devotion, and

a thought of any one else is more than sinful, for it is unfair.

As to your acquaintance with the other man, there is this to be said: When you are morally bound to another it is neither honorable nor just to encourage him to take an interest in you. You will probably do him grievous wrong, even if you do not do wrong to your husband or to yourself, which will be hard to avoid. Try to regain your husband's interest at once, and decide resolutely to have none but passing acquaintances. Break off your correspondence at once, telling your friend why you do so in a frank, womanly manner, and you may depend upon it that if he is a man of worth that he will respect you ten thousand times more for your action.

Let us hear from you again.

"I don't know of any one to turn to in my trouble but you, dear Miss Shirley, and I'm sure you will not refuse me. Both my parents died when I was a child, and for ten years I have lived in this little town with my grandparents. I am nearly eighteen years old, and am beginning to enjoy men's society, which my grandparents can't seem to understand. They make life miserable for me with their reproofs whenever I go out with any of my men friends, and I am tempted to cut loose from it all. There is one of my friends who wants me to marry him and go away. I don't really love him at all, but he swears he loves me, and I certainly respect him very much. Do you think I could be happy with him and make him a good wife?"

You poor little child, not to have had the benefit of a mother's advice and fostering care! There are many like you who have married for the sake of a home and have found that home—oh, so unhappy after the novelty and glamor of the change had worn off. Grace Shirley's advice is not to marry for any reason but one—and that is love. A marriage based on any other reason must in time prove unsatisfactory. Respect must go with love, of course, but respect alone is not sufficient to keep two people together "until death."

If you married without loving your husband you would only make him unhappy because he would yearn for what you could not give him. To see him unsatisfied would only dishearten you and make you even more unhappy.

Wait until the one comes along whom you know you really love and then decide.

In the meantime try and be friends with your grandparents, and in a kind way try to make them realize that you are young and need amusement, and there is no doubt but what they will remember that they, too, were young once and that they will meet you half way.

"I have read your advice to so many of the other sex that I hope you will be good-natured enough to help a man out with his troubles. I am very much in love with a young lady who, I am sure, thinks more of me than she does of any one else, but whenever I talk of marriage she either changes the subject or else jests about it. I cannot seem to make her understand that I am serious. Can't you give me a word of advice?"

"EDWARD."

We are very glad to help Edward or any others of the sterner sex with their troubles. Very probably the young woman of your desire realizes perfectly that you are in earnest, but wants to become convinced of her own sincerity before she lets you talk to her seriously about matrimony. We think she must be a very level-headed young woman, and if you can win her affection and marry her you may feel that you have secured a prize. The girl or woman who is slow to decide upon so serious a matter as marriage is far more to be esteemed than those who take the step hastily and unthinkingly.

"Your kind advice to others has made me bold enough to ask your help for myself, for I am terribly perplexed. My fiance went to the Philippines with his regiment over a year ago, and we have corresponded ever since. Of course, I think a great deal of him, but about six months ago I met a fellow who has been awfully attentive to me and who now wants me to marry him. Do you think it would be doing very wrong for me to break off my engagement and marry this other fellow, who says he loves me very much indeed?"

"MABEL K."

We don't envy either of your lovers very much, Mabel. A girl whose nature is as fickle as yours is not fit to be the fiancee or the wife of one of Uncle Sam's brave boys in blue, and if the absence of one man and the presence of another works so great a change in your feelings we doubt whether you would relish Grace Shirley's opinion of your actions. We think that your soldier lover would be well rid of you. The men who are defending the honor of their country deserve women of honor for wives and sweethearts—women whose devotion will not grow less because of absence, and to whom the attentions of other men will be no temptation to forget their lovers over the sea.

"While my betrothed and I are truly fond of each other, we always quarrel over one subject. He does not like me to play on the piano at all when he is here, but wants me to devote all the time to him. Sometimes I have no chance to practice during the day, and am obliged to do so in the evening. As I expect to have to provide my own pin money at least in this way after marriage, I do not feel that I should give up my entire evenings to conversation. Do you think I ought to do so?"

The man who is not able to provide his wife with pin money has no right to ask a woman to marry him. Since he has done so, and you have accepted him, you ought clearly to make him understand that your cultivation of your talent is a necessity because of his inability to provide you with what every woman has a right to expect from her husband. No woman ought to marry a man who cannot support her or who expects that she will have to earn her own pin money. We are sorry that you are engaged to one of so little manliness and capacity, and you should think a long time before binding yourself irrevocably.

"I want to ask your opinion on a matter of etiquette. I am engaged to be married, and, of course, my lover spends every evening with me. The other night an old friend called whom I had not seen for several years, and with whom I enjoyed chatting very much. My fiance was almost ungentlemanly, he showed his jealousy so plainly whenever I addressed a remark to my caller. Afterwards I remonstrated with him, and he said I had no right to even talk to other men. Was I wrong in trying to make myself agreeable to an old friend?"

There is nothing in the world that leads to so much unhappiness as unreasoning jealousy. If a woman who has pledged herself to a man deliberately flirts with others her fiance certainly has cause for jealousy; but in your case this was not so. A man who will become jealous at a sociable, harmless conversation will become jealous without any cause whatever, and will probably make his wife miserable through that very trait in his character. We all need more or less variety in this stupid old world, and the fact that you are an agreeable hostess to others does not give your lover or husband any reason for unjust suspicions. You will do well to have this plainly understood before you marry him.

"I guess you are tired of hearing about other people's troubles, but perhaps you can find a few minutes for me, for I am certainly in great trouble. I am deeply in love with a young man whom I know thinks more of me than he does of any one else, but who enjoys going around with other girls, and who says frankly that he will never marry. Now, I don't care a bit for any one else, and I am never happy unless he is with me. What can I do to gain his entire affection?"

We would not advise you to spend your time trying to gain his entire affection. There is an old saying about "wasting your sweetness on the desert air" that would seem to apply in your case. Why should you spend your time trying to

cultivate in this one man's heart an affection for you? There are lots of worthy men in the world, and you will discover them some day. The best advice we can give you is to cultivate the society of every man you know and try and discover his good points. Then you will not find the society of one man so indispensable to your happiness. Preserve your own self-respect and you will not go far wrong. Don't try to make people think something of you when they evidently do not wish to do so.

"My mother scolds me harshly for allowing young men to kiss me and place their arms about my waist. We are spending the summer at the seashore and all the boys and girls carry on more or less. Is mother right or is she only old-fashioned and prudish, as the other girls say?"

We think this is one of the saddest letters we ever read. Any girl ought to know that her mother's actions are for her good, and that her mother has her child's interest at heart even more than her husband's. We are sorry that you thought it necessary to ask our advice, but since you have you shall have it.

Laxity in manners is never excusable because one is at the seashore or mountains any more than if one was on Broadway. You would not let one of the boys kiss and embrace you on the corner of Broadway and Twenty-third street, would you? Well, you want to preserve your dignity just the same at the seashore. The boys may make fun of you for a day or two, but they will respect you a good deal more than they do the girls that forget to respect themselves. This is not being prudish or old-fashioned—it is simply being womanly.

"Do you think that a girl can be happy if she marries a poor man? I am engaged to the nicest fellow in the world, only he's poor, ever so much poorer than my father. I love him dearly and would marry him to-morrow if I was sure that I would not miss my home comforts. Sometimes they don't seem to amount to anything, and I feel as if I would be perfectly satisfied, and then again they seem so necessary to my life. Please advise me."

The mere possession of money never made any one happy. Some of our happiest days are when we have least of this world's goods. "Kind hearts are more than coronets," dear. If your fiance really loves you and you really love him the loss of a few unnecessary comforts will not be noticed. There is no sweeter pleasure in this world than the pleasures of giving and of going without for the sake of a loved one. If you love your future husband enough to feel pleasure at the giving up of some of your creature comforts you may safely take the step. On the contrary, if you feel that you relinquish them unwillingly and feel that you are going to miss them in spite of the presence of your husband, then you want to be cautious and sure of your ground before you decide to marry at all. A girl who values her own comfort more

than anything else is not a promising subject for the trials and responsibilities which invariably accompany matrimony.

Unselfishness is the very first quality necessary for those who propose to enter wedded life.

"I write to ask if it is true that men only desire to marry rich girls? Is there no chance for a poor girl who is loving and true-hearted to win a good, true husband even though she is poor and dependent upon her own exertions?"

Good men are looking for loving and true-hearted girls the world over just the same as they have always been. Our correspondent need not fear that there is no chance for her in the field of matrimony. A loyal, noble young man does not seek for a girl to pay the bills, he is both willing and glad to pay them himself, if only he can find in her a trusting, faithful companion—one who can bring joy into his busy life with her kisses and her smiles. In fact, we believe that most right-minded young men prefer the honor of supplying the funds for the family.

"About three months ago I inserted an advertisement in one of the matrimonial papers and received a number of replies. Some of them seemed to be from real nice fellows, and I have kept up a correspondence with them. One of them now wants me to go to New York and meet him for luncheon. It seems to me that it would be a jolly lark, but one of my girl friends says I had better not go. Do you think I would run any risk?"

FLORENCE C. R."

Your friend is perfectly right and much wiser than you are. No girl should correspond with men to whom she has not been properly introduced, and not even then unless her parents know of the correspondence and approve of it. Your anticipated "jolly lark" would likely turn out to be a most disagreeable episode. The men that answer advertisements in papers of this nature are in practically every case scoundrels of the very worst type. They seek the acquaintance of young girls simply for vicious purposes, and any young woman who desires to preserve her self-respect will avoid them as she would the plague. We advise you to break off this correspondence at once, and if you fortunately have a "big brother" you had better tell him the whole affair and let him write this would-be "masher" the sort of letter he richly deserves.

"I spent the summer at Asbury Park with an aunt and a couple of girl cousins. Every day we met two young men on the bathing beach and I took quite a fancy to one of them. Now that I am back home he is very anxious to call on me. How can I arrange to have him do so? I do not want to tell my parents how I met him, as they are both very 'straitlaced.'"

ISABEL."

Acquaintances made at summer resorts sometimes prove to be very desirable, but are quite as likely to turn out the opposite. If the young man's intentions and character are honorable, he will no doubt be able to find a way to become

properly introduced to you and your family. The manly way for him to act would be to call on your father and explain who he is, etc. Then let your father decide whether the acquaintance shall be continued.

No doubt the young man can find some one who knows him who is also known to your father either by reputation or personally, and who would serve as a proper person to make the necessary introduction. You cannot be too careful to preserve the niceties of etiquette in matters of this nature. Carelessness at the seashore should not be allowed to lead to license in the city.

"After spending the summer at the seashore I have returned to the city with my hands and face as brown as an Indian's, and all the girls make fun of me. What can I do to remove the tan?

"DOROTHY."

Don't let the girls' chatter disturb you a bit, Dorothy. The healthy brown that comes from exposure to God's pure air and sunshine is by no means unbecoming. You could not have any better evidence of perfect health and good circulation.

Never mind about the girls—the men will esteem your ruddy skin much more than they will that of your sallow or pale-faced acquaintances. There is nothing you can do that will remove the tan without injuring your complexion. All bleaches are injurious to the skin and should be avoided. Nature will remove the tan in her own good time, but if you want to hasten the process a little you might use a lemon cut in half. Rub this into the skin and the mild acid will help to whiten it. We would advise you to let the brown alone, however, for there is nothing that adds more to a young girl's beauty.

"Will you kindly do me the favor to decide a question for me? I am sixteen, and I have two admirers. One is rich and the other is poor, and as I think exactly the same of each, I cannot make up my mind which to marry. ADELE."

To tell you the truth, Adele, your letter is a "startler!" Apparently such a thing as love has not entered your mind, and yet you calmly insinuate that you would accept either one of these young men as your husband. We sincerely trust that you will "look before you leap." If you marry a man whom you do not love you will lead a miserable existence. Wait until you can honestly say that you love the man of your choice. You are too young to marry, anyway, so you can well afford to wait for him. The question of money need not weigh heavily in the balance. Be sure that your lover is able to support you, for that is absolutely necessary to the success of any marriage.

We would advise you to devote your time to study for two years at least, as it is very apparent that your nature has not yet been refined by affection.

"I hope you will not think me a silly girl for asking the following question, but I have heard so much of the blissful happiness of loving that I would like to know how I am to tell when I am really in love. I have met several young men who made me blissfully happy with their attentions, but I could not see any difference in my own feelings. Can it be possible that I really and truly love them all, or is it that I have never truly loved? Please answer this question.

"EVELYN."

We are very much amused at this ingenuous letter. You are honest, to say the least, and honesty is one of the greatest of virtues. We do not really believe that you have ever been in love, and the word "blissful" in your case means simply a wrong use of the adjective. When you really and truly "fall in love" you will recognize the difference, yet we do not blame you for coming to us in your perplexities.

"Will you kindly give me your opinion and advice in the following matter: The gentleman that I am engaged to has given me a diamond ring, and as I am a poor girl, working in a store, my parents say that I should not wear it to business. My fiance is also a poor clerk, but he saved enough from his earnings to purchase the ring, and he says if I do not wear it, it will hurt his feelings. How can I settle such a perplexing matter?


LUCY B. A."

Your perplexity is very natural under the circumstances, but we are inclined to think that you have a right to wear your sweetheart's ring, although we regret that he should have bought so conspicuous a trinket. Consistency in dress is always desirable, and we presume the rest of your costume hardly warrants wearing diamonds. You had better urge your parents to look at it differently. No doubt they will try to overcome their natural repugnance if asked to do so—or, perhaps, your lover will be willing to exchange the ring for one more in keeping with your modest position.

"I have only been married two years, but for the last six months I have been desperately unhappy. My husband took to riding a bicycle a few months ago, and now he spends all his leisure time off on his wheel. The only time I see him at home is when he is either cleaning or repairing the miserable machine. I have a sweet little baby to take care of, and I can't find any opportunity to ride a wheel myself. I don't want to interfere with his pleasure, but I would like to receive more of his attention. Won't you advise me how to accomplish this?

KITTIE V. V."

Bicycling is a pastime for which there seems to be a craze at present, and the best of men are yielding to the infatuation of the wheel. You certainly are to be pitied for the loss of your husband's society, but we can only advise you to bear with him patiently and try to show him exactly how you feel on the subject. Above all, do not scold or threaten to "smash his old wheel," as it will have a tendency to make him "scorch" away from you forever.



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